OUR CONFERENCE NUMBER

# Labour Monthly

EDITED BY R. PALME DUTT

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# LABOUR MONTHLY

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# LABOUR and the WAR

## DELEGATE CONFERENCE

*Under the auspices of the*
*"LABOUR MONTHLY"*

## Sunday, February 25th, 1940

at the

## Holborn Hall, London, W.C.1

THIS war has brought the whole Labour Movement face to face with the greatest crisis in its history. Every Trade Unionist and Socialist is aware that the war is raising issues decisive for the whole future of the working class and socialism. On all sides there is widespread questioning and growing opposition to the war, no less than to the efforts of the Government and its supporters to impose on the working class the cost and burdens of the war. But this growing opposition is hampered in its expression by the existence of the present political and industrial truce. The independence of the Labour Movement is in the gravest danger.

In this situation, and as a means of assisting the clearing of the issues within the working-class movement, the LABOUR MONTHLY is organising a One-day Delegate Conference on "Labour and the War," to be held in London on Sunday, February 25th, 1940.

Since 1921, the LABOUR MONTHLY has devoted itself to the examination of the political and industrial problems chiefly confronting the working-class organisations. Through the pages of the magazine and by representative Conferences it has sought to find solutions to these problems and to show the way forward over capitalism and its wars and towards the establishment of socialism in Great Britain.

The Conference will deal with vital problems in the minds of the majority of active workers in the Labour Movement. It is in the assurance that this Conference will prove of vital value and interest to all working-class and progressive organisations that we most earnestly invite them to appoint two or more delegates.

R. Palme Dutt

Editor, LABOUR MONTHLY.

(*See next page for Agenda*)

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# LABOUR MONTHLY CONFERENCE—AGENDA

10 a.m. FIRST SESSION

**THE POLICY OF THE LABOUR MOVEMENT IN THE WAR**

*Chairman :* Councillor R. SILKOFF (*Secretary, Stepney Trades and Labour Council*).

*Opener :* Mr. R. PALME DUTT (*Editor of "Labour Monthly."*)

ADJOURNMENT 1.15 p.m. Lunch obtainable in Hall at moderate cost.

2.15 p.m. SECOND SESSION

**WAR ECONOMY AND THE WORKERS' STRUGGLE**

*Chairman :* Mr. W. H. THOMPSON (*Chairman of National Council for Civil Liberties*).

*Openers :* Mr. ARTHUR HORNER (*President of South Wales Miners' Federation*).

Mr. W. J. R. SQUANCE (*late Gen. Secretary of Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen*).

ADJOURNMENT 5.15 p.m. Tea obtainable in Hall at moderate cost.

6 p.m. THIRD SESSION

**WHAT MUST BE DONE?**

*Chairman :* Mr. W. H. THOMPSON.

*Opener :* Mr. W. GALLACHER, M.P.

CLOSE OF CONFERENCE 7.30 p.m. Supper obtainable in Hall at moderate cost.

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8 p.m. to 10.30 p.m.

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# NOTES OF THE MONTH

*The "Grimmer Phase"—A Triple Offensive—Enlarging the War—Neutrals and the War—American Policy—Anglo-American Antagonism—The Soviet Union and the War—War Plans against the Soviet Union—The Rôle of the Second International—The Close of the "Breathing Space"—In the Balance—The Attack on the Working Class—British, French and German Workers—Economic Offensive—War Economy and Working-class Rights—Harbingers of the Attack—Into the Struggle*

THE LABOUR MONTHLY Delegate Conference on Labour and the War at the end of this month will be meeting on the completion of the first half-year of the war. The changes during this half-year have been rapid and far-reaching ; but they have only been a prelude to the sterner issues now in front. The full transition from peacetime to wartime is still developing ; the full extent of the war is still unfolding itself ; the main blows against the workers are still preparing. While the first signs of awakening against the war have already begun to spread far more rapidly than in the corresponding period of 1914, this awakening is lagging far behind the speed of events. The ferment in the working class is still gathering against heavy obstacles of illusions, uncertainties and reactionary leadership, and is groping to find the path of organised struggle. But the hurricane of war does not wait for the laggard. The war-making forces of capitalism are losing no time to take advantage of this confusion in order to drive forward their offensive at an accelerating pace. Within six months of the outbreak of war, the new war front against the Soviet Union has been created. The rights of the French workers, who three years ago were leading the working class movement in the capitalist world, have been destroyed. The conditions of the British workers have been heavily worsened. All this is only a beginning for what is in preparation. *The war-makers, and the British and French imperialists in the first place, are gathering their forces for their heaviest*

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*offensive in the spring and summer of this year.* The British Prime Minister openly proclaims the "grimmer phase" of the war now approaching. It is well that the meaning of this prediction should be understood. For this deepening offensive, alike on the international front, and against the workers at home, is the immediate reality which any working-class conference on the war at the present point must face.

WHAT is the direction of this offensive? Three main aspects may be defined. In the first place, the imperialists on all sides, and especially the British and French imperialists, the main driving forces of the war, are striving, as Churchill's broadcast on January 20 openly proclaimed, to enlarge the war, to draw in additional countries, to leave no neutrals, and to carry forward the conflagration from its present still limited character to general European war, and eventually to world war. Churchill's speech was a threat to all neutrals. At all costs the deadlock of the present position must be ended, which is proving as incapable of solving the problems of the imperialists as the previous unstable peace; and since all proposals for peace have been rejected, they now seek new and more violent means to break the stalemate by extending the fronts of war. "The storm will not pass. It will rage and roar ever more loudly, ever more widely. It will spread to the South. It will spread to the North." Such is the language of these incendiary madmen. The war which was launched in September, 1939, is more and more clearly revealed as only a stage in the development of world war. *The enlarging war, which has in fact been growing continuously for these eight and a half years since Japan's offensive in the Far East in* 1931 (*with the connivance and assistance of the British National Government at every stage*) *is still extending, and has not yet reached its final form.* The British imperialists now stand out openly as the main promoters of world war. Having for eight years fanned the flames of war from small beginnings to their present extent, having stifled and strangled every demand of the smaller neutral States, of the peoples and of the Soviet Union for a common stand against aggression, at a time when such a stand would have

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been easy and would have checked the growth of war, they now have the insolence to demand of the neutral States to enter their war in the name of a stand against aggression, and thus seek to ensure themselves an easy victory by extending their war as a world crusade for the establishment of British world domination and for the destruction of socialism throughout the world.

THE alarm and indignation of all the smaller neutral states at Churchill's speech is the measure of the pressure which is being placed upon them by the British offensive. Even in the carefully censored British press it has had to be admitted that Churchill's speech has aroused universal condemnation from the representatives of all parties in the neutral states. "A 'brickbat directly aimed at the Scandinavian nations' was how Danish circles interpreted Mr. Churchill's remarks" (British United Press). In Holland the *Rotterdamsche Courant* heads its report of the broadcast "Sharp attack on the neutrals." "No, Mr. Churchill, Belgium does not feed the crocodile," was the reply of the Belgian Conservative *Nation Belge*. "The neutrals will not appreciate the invitation to intervene," was the judgment of the *New York Times*. Most significant was the debate in the Dutch Chamber, the report of which from Reuter's Hague correspondent on January 24 failed to appear in the British press:

> Mr. Churchill's radio speech is still arousing discussion in Holland. In the First Chamber to-day speakers were unanimous in describing his arguments as fallacious.
>
> "Aggression," said one deputy, "could have been checked before. Abyssinia, Austria, Czechoslovakia, etc., had been left in the lurch."
>
> "France and Britain bear the full responsibility for the failure of collective security. Mr. Churchill loses sight of the historical facts."
>
> "This war," said another speaker, "has not been started in the interests of civilisation, right and the small States. England is not fighting now for Poland, but because her vital interests are affected."

These statements were the unanimous verdict on the war, not of Communist speakers, but of the ordinary capitalist representatives of the neutral States. They may be recom-

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mended to the study of the Labour Party protagonists of the "holy war." The neutrals see very clearly that in this conflict of giant Powers for world domination they are the victims. The claptrap about high moral principles from the Chamberlains and Churchills does not impress them. Never was there such an undisguisedly cynical, sordid war for reactionary ends, the true character of which is becoming increasingly recognised on all sides even in the early months of its progress.

THE drive to extend the war is not confined to the war-making states, but is also promoted by the ruling classes of the capitalist Great Powers still outside the war. These Powers seek equally to profit from the extension of the war, and watch for the moment themselves to intervene in order to have their say in the final division of the world. Italian Fascism gives warning against "the illusion that the present position of Italy towards the war will necessarily be perpetual. Fascist Italy may at any moment find herself under the necessity and duty of taking up arms" (report of the Secretary of the Italian Fascist Party, January 17). Italian Fascism assists and promotes by every means the new war front in the North against the Soviet Union, seeking to involve Britain, France, the Scandinavian States and the Soviet Union in that sphere, in order to clear the path for its own offensive aims in the Balkans and the Near East. The Japanese militarists seek to take advantage of the European war, with alternate offers and threats to either side, in order to advance their position in the Far East and establish their puppet Wang Government in China ; and Anglo-Japanese negotiations are once anew pressed forward for an agreement on the basis of the partition of China, recognition of the Japanese-controlled Wang Government (with handing over of the Tientsin silver to it) and common antagonism to the Soviet Union and the United States.

MOST subtle is the game of the United States big capitalists, who, while taking every precaution to keep out themselves at the present still early stage, promote by every means the war in Europe, hastily abrogate their former

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neutrality legislation (which was sternly upheld to starve democratic Spain or China of arms) in order to foment the war with additional war supplies, incite and urge on in their press the Anglo-French combination to renewed efforts on behalf of civilisation, and pour scorn on the relatively slow tempo of the war. At the same time they pile up their own armaments in preparation for the moment when they shall finally intervene and by their intervention emerge, as they calculate, the ultimate victors in a war-weakened world. Roosevelt's January speech, in which he chided the too simple-minded conceptions of the " ostriches " who assumed that it would be permanently possible to keep the United States out of the war, showed the first step in the preparation of public opinion for this ultimate intervention. Such intervention, however, has reference to the future. The present stage is still that of the promoter of war from without.

THE present policy of the United States financiers towards the British Empire bears a certain analogy to the policy which the British ruling class endeavoured in the preceding period to carry out towards Hitler. The more they can foster the use of the military, naval and air power of the British Empire as their gendarme against Hitler and against the Soviet Union, the more they can at the same time weaken the British Empire through the consequent war and increase their own relative superiority of strength. *The " friendliness " and enthusiastic backing of Wall Street and upper class United States opinion for the British Empire in the present war is thus the characteristic present expression of the continuous Anglo-American antagonism.* Alongside this " co-operation," the same Anglo-American antagonism shows itself openly in the economic field, with the running fight over the blockade regulations and the avalanche of protest notes, with the stern enforcement of the " cash-and-carry " provisions to tie up British shipping and free American shipping for the conquest of South American markets from Britain and Germany, and with the intensified fight to take advantage of the war conditions to strengthen the American position at the expense of the belligerent Powers in the world markets outside Europe.

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*AGAINST this drive of capitalism to extend the war, alike on the part of the war-making Powers and of the leading capitalist Powers still outside the war, the main force checking and blocking the extensions of the war, and so far holding it within its present limits, is the Soviet Union.* This intensifies the fury of the imperialists against the Soviet Union, whom they had originally hoped to involve in their war-trap, only to find that by their incitements they had fallen into it themselves. Thus in the present situation the drive to extend the war takes on a special character and a predominant direction—*the drive to extend the war against the Soviet Union.* This aspect of the offensive of imperialism, led by the British and French Governments, takes on every day greater importance as the more and more visibly dominant issue of the world situation. Where before any analysis of the basic counter-revolutionary aims of British imperialist policy, continuously pursued through all the zig-zags since the defeat of the first interventionist wars, used to be dismissed by the wiseacres as the fantastic imaginings of Communists, to-day the facts compel recognition from the blindest and most sceptical. The issue in Finland has unmasked the guns of Western imperialism, and of its propaganda agency, the Second International. The fight of Western imperialism in Finland is an *offensive* fight, just as it was two decades ago, and is bound up with the parallel military preparations and massing of troops in the Near East, the open call in the Anglo-French reactionary press for the sending of expeditionary forces, the mobilisation of the League of Nations (with simultaneous suppression of the items of Albania and China, victims of aggression, from the agenda), the Liberal-Labour anti-Soviet propaganda campaign, and the world attack on Communism in all capitalist countries.

THIS is the maximum common ground on which the widest range of divers and conflicting imperialist forces strive to find unity. The most chauvinist aggressive reactionary forces of British and French imperialism, which seek by all means to extend the war and to break the Western stalemate by the development of an Eastern theatre of war

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here join hands with the former Munich elements which stumbled into this war against their intention, precisely because they were seeking to promote anti-Soviet war, and would now be only too thankful to find a means to transform this war into anti-Soviet war and to build on this basis a world counter-revolutionary front under British leadership. The neutral fascist forces, which have been thrown into confusion by the dissolution of the old " Anti-Comintern " Pact and find only cause for alarm in the conflict between British and German reaction, seek to find here their solution. Franco Spain, Italian Fascism and the Vatican unite in deploring the present conflict and calling for the most rapid combination against Bolshevism.

> The longer the conflict lasts, the less does it appear justified . . . . Whatever the result of the present struggle, it will be equally catastrophic . . . . Our country joins her voice to that of her sister nation Imperial Italy and to many other States who are seeking to end a struggle which, if pursued to the end, will open the door of the West to Asiatic barbarism (Franco, New Year broadcast).

The swashbucklers of fascism, the Francos and Mussolinis, present themselves in the forefront as the leaders of the crusade of " Western civilisation," proclaimed by the Attlees and Coles, against socialism (" Asiatic barbarism ").

IN this mingled combination, alongside the Francos and Mussolinis, the Churchills and Mannerheims, the leaders of the Second International, the Tanners, Blums and Citrines find their home. Having sternly maintained " non-intervention " against Spanish democracy fighting fascism, they are now in the forefront in demanding intervention in Finland against socialism. Having refused arms to Spanish democracy, they demand arms for Finnish fascism. Having refused a common front with the Communist International for the defence of democracy and peace, they have no hesitation in making a common front with the old Tsarist butcher, Mannerheim, and the White Guards against the Socialist State. Having refused a common front with the Communists and left wing workers in Britain for the purpose of defeating Chamberlain and his war plans, they have no difficulty in

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joining up in a common organisation with the leaders of the Friends of Franco organisation or the Chairman of the Non-Intervention Committee for the purpose of a counter-revolutionary war of intervention. Such is the final outcome of their policy. The Southport policy of saving Chamberlain in the name of refusing any association with non-socialist representatives here receives its fitting comment in the field of practice. Unable to satisfy their ardour in the imperialist war alone, they find at last the full " holy war " to which they can devote all their passion and conviction in the war on socialism, accompanied by the parallel drive against the militant workers at home, to suppress by every means in their power every trace of an independent working-class movement. Unable any longer to conceal their counter-revolutionary aims even under the lying slogan " democracy versus dictatorship," since they have now made a common front with the fascist counter-revolutionaries against the land of socialism, they have to raise the new flag, proclaimed equally by Franco, Mussolini, Chamberlain, Blum, Attlee, Cole, Woolf or the rest, of " Western civilisation "—that is, Western imperialism.

WE should take a serious, but at the same time a soberly reasoned view of these developments and where they are leading. Lenin always warned that, while the first Socialist State and the capitalist States could live side by side at peace for a period, such a breathing space could not continue indefinitely, but must eventually give place to renewed conflict in even more intense forms. In 1919, he declared :

> We are living, not merely in a State, but in a system of States, and the existence of the Soviet Republic side by side with the imperialist States for a long time is unthinkable. One or the other must triumph in the end. And before that end supervenes, a series of frightful collisions between the Soviet Republic and the bourgeois States will be inevitable (Lenin, Report of the Central Committee of the Eighth Congress of the Russian Communist Party, March, 1919).

At the end of 1920, after the defeat of the first round of wars of intervention, he stated :

> We have just passed from war to peace, but we have not forgotten that war will again return. As long as capitalism and

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> socialism exist, we cannot live in peace ; in the end, one or the other will triumph—a funeral dirge will be sung either over the Soviet Republic or over world capitalism (Lenin, speech to Moscow organisation of the Russian Communist Party, November, 1920).

The breathing space that then opened has lasted—with many shocks and warlike incidents—for nineteen years. The actions of the Western imperialists, using Finland as an initial base for their operations, are now threatening to bring it to a close.

WHETHER the war plans of those powerful sections of Western imperialism which are working to develop the present indirect intervention into full-scale war against the Soviet Union will achieve their object in the immediate future is not yet a decided issue. The answer of Chamberlain to a question on this point on January 24 is worth noting :

> The decision whether or not to break off relations with the Soviet Government is one that would require most careful consideration in all its aspects, and is not to be dealt with satisfactorily by means of question and answer (N. Chamberlain, in the House of Commons, January 24, 1940).

While the ultimate renewal of armed conflict between the capitalist world and the socialist world is inevitable, the issue at a given moment depends on a variety of factors. It depends on many factors in the camp of imperialism, where the contradictions are at present extreme. Above all, it depends on the rôle of the international working class, and in particular, at the present point, on the response of the working class in this country to the first forms of intervention through the dispatch of arms and warplanes to Finland.

IT is this situation that gives added importance to the third aspect of the offensive now developing—the offensive against the British working class. On all sides and in all countries the attack on the working class is sharpening as the inevitable accompaniment of the present world situation. We see this, not only in Europe, but in the present United States extreme drive against Communism and the labour movement. Imperialist war necessarily means war on the working class, on the standards and rights of the workers, for the enslavement of the workers to the war machine of

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monopoly capital. This is accentuated in the present world situation by the extreme instability of class relations, the existence of the Soviet Union and the counter-revolutionary war plans of imperialism against the Soviet Union. Such counter-revolutionary war plans require as their condition for the possibility of achievement the subjection and paralysis of action of the working class. The Nazi war machine, which was originally intended by the Western imperialists to serve against the Soviet Union, was built on the basis of the subjection of the German working class by fascism. Only the strength of the Soviet Union, and of the movement of solidarity of the working people of Britain and France beginning to press forward against their rulers for a common front with the Soviet Union, led the German fascist rulers at the last moment to retreat from their plans and establish a basis of peace with the Soviet Union. When the British and French imperialists thereupon took over the direct leadership of the world counter-revolutionary front with open hostility to the Soviet Union, the offensive was immediately launched against the French workers, as the strongest and most advanced after the temporary striking down of the German movement, for the suppression of French Communism, the disruption of their trade unions, the destruction of their standards and previous gains and the militarisation of labour.

THE British workers have not yet been subjected to the same intensity of attack as the German and French workers. This slower rate of development corresponds to the greater strength of British capitalism which, on the basis of its reserves, has still been able to maintain control by its traditional methods of liberal corruption of the upper stratum without recourse to the desperate measures of German and French capitalism. But the imperative needs of the war now make it indispensable for the British capitalists to deliver a heavy offensive against the standards and rights of the British working class on a scale exceeding any previous experience in Britain. Every speech of every Government Minister, banker and industrialist proclaims this impending offensive. The British working-class movement occupies at this moment,

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now more than ever, a key position in the world situation, not only because it operates in the citadel of world capitalism, of the leader of the war and of world reaction, but because it retains very great possibilities of rapid action and organisation still unbroken, although heavily shackled by the policy of the leadership. For the purpose of the war plans of Anglo-French capitalism the offensive against the British working class is now indispensable, and represents no subsidiary front, but a main front of the whole war offensive. *The inner struggle in Britain and the degree of resistance of the British working class is thus now one of the main decisive factors for the further development of the world situation.*

THE general lines of this offensive now developing in this country are clear. In the economic sphere it means in the first place a drastic reduction in the standards of the entire working class and of all the poorer sections of the population. What has been already achieved by the rise in prices outstripping the very small wage increases of a minority (a net increase of 2 to 3 per cent. on the total wages bill, against an officially recorded increase in the cost of living of 12 per cent.—in fact, probably double that, according to careful investigations—and representing therefore a net cut of 10 per cent. by the official figures and probably more like 20 per cent. in fact) is nevertheless only a beginning which is regarded as a mere bagatelle by the official economists and war politicians compared to what they want to take. War economy means, as Stalin explained, " developing to the utmost the production of goods necessary for war and not for consumption by the population ; restricting to the utmost the production and especially the sale of articles of general consumption, and consequently reducing consumption by the population." What the war economists and war politicians are agreed in demanding is a reduction of something like one quarter to one third in the standards of the working people. On the question of the methods to be employed there is still controversy between rival plans, which are in practice likely to be used in combination : prevention of wage increases alongside rising prices ; taxation ; levies on wages ; compul-

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sory saving ; lowered basic rates with family allowances ; restriction by all-round rationing. But on the goal there is no question :

> The total private expenditure of the British people will have to be reduced in the course of the war by at least a third . . . . The only relevant question is not whether sacrifices are to be asked from the smaller incomes, but by what means they are to be exacted (*Economist*, December 2, 1939).

When it is remembered that ten millions of the population were already before the war below the minimum level of subsistence, the significance of this can begin to be imagined.

WAR economy necessarily means the attack, not only on the standards, but equally on the rights of the workers. For the peculiar character of war economy is precisely that there are boom conditions in war industry, which should normally give the workers the most favourable conditions for winning advances, while in fact a heavy worsening has to be imposed. This is the problem which equally besets the Government and the Trades Union Congress leadership. The workers have to be induced to surrender the power of their position, either by bamboozlement over the high moral aims of the war and the necessity of sacrifices, or, when that appeal weakens, by straight compulsion. War economy and the right to strike cannot exist together. Seven months of the last war brought the Treasury Agreement of the Government, the employers and the Trades Union Congress leadership by which the right to strike was abandoned, and this was followed by the Munitions Act making strikes in essential war industries illegal and tying the worker to his place of work. The Government and the Trades Union Congress leadership are once more in negotiation ; and the control of Employment Act is already on the Statute Book, though not yet brought into use. It is at this point that the economic offensive under war conditions necessarily merges into the political offensive against the rights of working class organisation and the democratic rights of the people.

THE offensive against working-class rights and organisation invariably opens with the attack on Communism and the militant workers, as the first step to the attack on

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the trade unions and all working-class organisation. The attack is also no less invariably opened, not by the Government directly, but by the labour lieutenants of capitalism, the reactionary trade union and social democratic leaders, who seek to show their prowess in attacking and denouncing the militant workers, repeating parrot-fashion capitalist press abuse of " the Reds," " foreign doctrines," " foreign agents," " traitors to their country," etc., purge and expel them from their organisations, drive out whole sections, and thus open the way to the general capitalist and Government attack and wreck the working-class movement. This was the path of destruction in Germany, where Social Democracy opened the ball, seeking to the last to win approval by swearing loyalty to Hitler and denouncing the Communists. This was the path of destruction in France, where Blum and the French Socialist Party played the same miserable rôle. With those examples before them, the British Labour Party and Trades Union Congress leaders are now treading the same path. The action of the members of the General Council against the working-class press, Attlee's denunciation of the militant section of the working-class movement in the style of the *Daily Mail* as " mere appendages to foreign dictators," Citrine's declaration that the suppression of the majority working-class party in France was " logical " and urging that the same ends can be attained in this country by other means, and the wholesale threats and expulsions beginning against sections of the labour and trade union movement daring to express the normal views of international socialism on a capitalist war—all these are ominous and familiar signs. They require the most urgent and decisive reaction from all sections of the working-class movement to stop the poison before it has gone further, including from whatever elements of the leadership are not yet utterly corrupted and besotted by imperialist jingoism and anti-socialist anti-soviet frenzy and have still some concern for the future and existence of the working-class movement.

THE awakening in the working-class movement is spreading ; but it is spreading all too slowly for the speed of



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events. The Communists, the opposition forces in the Labour Party and the militant trade unionists have now most responsible tasks to face. It is necessary, despite all the obstruction of reactionary leadership, to organise the struggle, and to draw millions into the struggle, for the protection of the standards and rights of the working class, equally in the economic and in the political field. For this the unity of the workers, of all the local working-class organisations holding firmly together despite intimidation or disruption from above, and above all of the workers in the factories and plants of war industry, is the key to victory. Given unity and leadership, the strength of the industrial workers in wartime, even in a single factory or area, is very great, and cannot be broken by threats or coercion ; and the learning of the consciousness of that strength through the first forms of struggle, however elementary and limited, opens the way to the advance to deepening struggle against the war and the War Government. We are approaching big issues. The first months of the war have been months of the gathering of the vanguard to find themselves in the new conditions and reach clearness of their line. The task now opens to advance to active mass struggle ; and the degree of success in this, and the strength of the struggles into which we now enter, in the face of the impending heavy war offensive at home and abroad, will determine the character of the period which now opens and the further development of the war.

R. P. D.

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# New Fronts for Old

## BY QUÆSTOR

DESPERATE EFFORTS ARE being made to form a new war front of the imperialist world against the Soviet Union. The very existence of the war between the Allies and Germany is a stimulus, not a barrier, to those efforts. For that war continually reminds the imperialists on both sides that, while it arises in a general way out of their antagonisms, its specific origin in September, 1939, lies in two gigantic miscalculations. Hitler thought that he could go on unhampered in the unilateral redivision of the world in favour of Germany which had been proceeding ever since 1935, merely by waving the flag of " alliance with Bolshevism " as previously he had waved the flag of " alliance against Bolshevism." Chamberlain was sure that Hitler would prefer to fight the U.S.S.R. rather than Britain and France, and that if Hitler, after all, attacked in the west the Soviet Union was committed by " ideological " considerations to make war on Nazi Germany. Each side realised their miscalculations too late to prevent the outbreak of the second European war.

Similar miscalculations occurred in 1914 ; but at that time there was no reason to prevent the development of the war to its full. This time both sides are actually aware of the existence of the U.S.S.R., and of public opinion which has not forgotten the sordid story of the aggressions against Ethiopia, Spain, China, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Albania (1935-1939). One does not have to look very far in the British, the French or the German press, or to read very deeply between the lines, to become aware of the gnawing regret on both sides that the others are not fighting the U.S.S.R. instead of their present opponents. People talk of the frightful slaughter which direct attacks on the Maginot and Siegfried lines would entail ; that is true, but it is no explanation of hesitation on the part of three groups of imperialists whose record shows that the last thing they shrink from is slaughter of the common people. It is the political consideration—the lessons which their peoples would draw from the slaughter, in existing conditions—which are the determining factor in imposing on the war its present " curious " character. In politics, if not in logic, the conclusion for imperialist governments from such a situation is to try and find a way out against the U.S.S.R.

During the triangular Anglo-Turkish-Soviet negotiations, and again during the Soviet negotiations with the Baltic States (which were also triangular in reality, because the British Government was playing the unseen part of inciter to resistance to Soviet proposals) the National Government's determination if possible to keep a door

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open into the U.S.S.R. was quite as marked as the Soviet determination to close it. The negotiations with Finland brought Chamberlain and Daladier out into the open: the venom and fury of their kept press against the U.S.S.R., for daring to try and undo the work done by British and German interventionists in 1918-19, and by the British and German General Staffs in more recent years, was more violent even than against Germany. When the war in Finland began the official press in both countries made no bones about giving it far greater prominence than the war against Germany. Incredible though many innocent people would have thought it three months ago, the chances of the British and French Governments starting a war on the U.S.S.R., with the obvious calculation that Hitler, who has been comparatively speaking left alone for so long will fall in behind are now very great. That was why Mr. Duff-Cooper, one of the official British propagandists in the U.S.A., could prophesy to an American audience that "Britain will be at war with Russia very soon."

It is important to reiterate that, while these tendencies were natural and inevitable, the U.S.S.R. has not treated their outcome—war between Britain and the U.S.S.R.—as inevitable. The Soviet Government has made serious efforts to improve Anglo-Soviet relations, but they have all been repelled with cold hostility. On September 3 the U.S.S.R. proclaimed its neutrality, and when Lord Halifax asked its attitude three weeks later, the Soviet Government on September 27 repeated its declaration of neutrality. That alone should have been the signal for an effort by personal contact to improve relations; but the British Government rejected this opportunity, just as it rejected the Soviet Government's invitation to Lord Halifax to come to Moscow last June. Again, the Soviet Government on September 27 had also replied to Halifax's enquiry about the possibility of trade negotiations that it saw no reason for not starting them immediately; but the National Government did not respond for a whole month, until October 25—by which time the anti-Soviet campaign in connection with the Baltic negotiations had showed what the British Government's game was. When the offer of negotiations did come, on October 25, it was now clear that these could not be regarded as sincere, but as a mask for anti-Soviet moves all over the world.

The rejection of Soviet offers of friendship was accomplished by such a ferocious and sustained outburst of lying about the U.S.S.R., particularly in France, as could only be the preliminary barrage for a rupture. On three separate occasions, the official French and British censorships have passed lying stories about Molotov being expected in Berlin. On several occasions, they have allowed it to be announced that a military mission from Germany is in Moscow, apparently reorganising the Red Army. One of the wickedest provocations of all was the announcement in the British press, sedulously repeated by the B.B.C., that the Germans had been allowed to create a sub-

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marine base at Murmansk—this with the obvious purpose of suggesting the despatch of a British naval force against the Soviet coasts. Insolent and unabashed mendacity reached its height when a French Foreign Office spokesman announced, according to the *Daily Telegraph* on January 16, that German troops were actually quartered on Soviet territory at Lvov. The fantastic lying which went on from the very first days of the Finnish war was accompanied by a sinister campaign in the French press for a rupture of diplomatic relations and the despatch of troops to the U.S.S.R.

The Soviet Union has taken the action it did on its borders precisely because it saw this coming, as a natural outcome of the nature of the European war described earlier. The Baltic States, from Lithuania to Finland, were set up as White outposts against the U.S.S.R. in 1918-19, and maintained by the investment of capital and the help of military and naval missions, just in view of such a situation. Therefore the first concern of the U.S.S.R. when a large-scale European war had once again brought back the possibility of massive attack on the first Socialist State was to change this situation. Obviously, the Soviet Government did not want to do this by warlike means if possible, and the treaties with the Baltic States prove it. It took military action in Finland only when the frontier provocations of the Mannerheim gang (no novelty on the Soviet-Finnish frontier, but new and important precisely because they came this time in the midst of a war, and with the anti-Soviet element coming out into the forefront) showed that someone was stirring up the Finnish Whites against the U.S.S.R., someone moreover who was apparently reckoning that during the winter months the U.S.S.R. would be powerless. The U.S.S.R. showed that these calculations were false. By doing so it did not " precipitate events " as defeatists and renegades assert, who never wished to see their imperialist friends taken by surprise. On the contrary, the U.S.S.R. anticipated events—particularly the event of a spring anti-Soviet offensive. The shedding of tears over Soviet " hastiness " is on all fours with the lamentations over the Soviet executions of traitors like Tukhachevsky and Zinoviev.

To help down the bitter pill they have had to swallow, the imperialists in Britain and France have launched a lie campaign of fantastic dimensions about the course of the war. It started with the assertion that the U.S.S.R. had planned a " blitzkrieg " and " Helsinki in a week " —a lie not only unsupported by any real evidence, but also contrary to the very nature of Soviet military tactics, which are based on destroying the enemies' machinery of repression of the people, not the people themselves. The very figures of the civilians unavoidably killed and injured in gigantic air bombardments of military objectives show that the Soviet aim was really to spare the civilian population. Lies about the poor equipment of the Soviet troops, lies about their being unfamiliar with the rigours of winter or with skis, lies about

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" divisions " destroyed—with the loss of 27(!) guns and 1,380 rifles—these and similar inventions have filled the columns of the British and French press, usually to the exclusion of the war against Germany, while the very rare but crushing rejoinders of the Soviet side have been carefully omitted or reduced to a mere garbled or meaningless extract. The people of Finland, deprived for years of the opportunity of self-expression through free trade unions, a free working-class press and a legal Communist Party, are represented as enthusiastically behind the bankers and White Guards who govern Finland. The rôle of the former progressives in spreading this particular lie is especially contemptible, even though Mr. Forrest and others of his kind possibly do not suspect that in doing so, they become the allies of the Finnish Fascist Schutzcorps who supply the N.C.O.s and officers to the army and police, for the express purpose of preventing any independent expression of opinion by the Finnish rank and file, civil or military.

The preparations for creating a south-eastern front against the U.S.S.R. are particularly striking disproof of the impudent chatter about the U.S.S.R. having " precipitated events " by its action in Finland. The *Daily Telegraph*, in a long article by its correspondent at Beirut, in Syria, has revealed the existence of huge French forces there, numbered by the American press at some 400,000, with a further 100,000 British troops in Egypt and Palestine. These troops, according to the American press again, are to constitute one single army under the French General Weygand, jointly with the Turkish army. For form's sake, the author of the *Daily Telegraph* article mentioned briefly the excuse that this force, totalling not much less than a million men, is destined for the protection of Rumania against German invasion. But the protection of Rumania is not the uppermost thought in the minds of the British and French Governments when dealing with the Black Sea : the Soviet-Turkish Pact which they torpedoed by insisting on the right to send their warships through the Dardanelles against the U.S.S.R., if necessary, would have given efficient protection to Rumania. Indeed, the *Daily Telegraph* article itself was chiefly concerned with discussing the ways and means of fighting the U.S.S.R. In the course of it, the writer blew sky-high the shameless excuses about " respecting the wishes of small nations " which were the British and French Governments' pretexts for sabotaging the negotiations for mutual assistance with the U.S.S.R. If the Government of Iran, said the writer, does not appeal to the Allies for aid against the U.S.S.R., some formula must be found, " meeting international law conditions," to enable Great Britain to take the necessary steps on Iran territory to " protect " the South Persian oilfields.

Simultaneously, the leading French Foreign Office organ, the *Temps*—which at the same time is the property of the French iron and steel manufacturers—has been running a steady campaign for an attack on the U.S.S.R. through the Black Sea. One day its oil

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correspondent shows the damage to be inflicted on Soviet and German economy by the seizure of the Baku oilfields ; another day their military correspondent discusses how many Allied warships would be necessary to crush Soviet resistance in the Black Sea. This in a paper which receives financial support from the French Foreign Office, and whose every news item has to pass through the most rigid censorship in the world. Other influential papers, like the *Petit Parisien* and the *Figaro*, echo this campaign.

In the Far East likewise efforts are continuing to constitute an anti-Soviet front. The *Economist* openly pleads for Japan to reach a settlement with Britain and America, resting content with economic control of northern China and the recognition of her puppet Government's currency, and for Chiang Kai-Skek to accept a settlement with Japan also on this basis. It threatens him with the rival government of the renegade Wang Ching-Wei if he does not yield ; and it counters the plain fact that only the Soviet Union is granting disinterested help to China by repeating Japanese propaganda lies about a Soviet-Japanese agreement at China's expense. Mr. Vernon Bartlett, in the *News Chronicle*, and Mr. Kingsley Martin, in the *New Statesman and Nation*, join in the outcry about mythical Soviet quarrels with China, just because this serves as a convenient smokescreen to hide the dirty intrigues of British imperialist diplomacy in the Far East. These intrigues and threats derived new encouragement from having already made the Chinese Government wobble at a crucial moment in the Geneva discussions, when a united front was being organised to expel from the League the only country which had remained loyal to League principles in dealing with China—namely, the U.S.S.R. The movement is also encouraged by high hopes of drawing the United States into an anti-Soviet *bloc* in the Far East.

The success of these manœuvres is far from assured, of course. It is not certain that Japan, any more than Hitler, is willing to draw down on herself the might of the Red Army—which it knows on better evidence than that of the Finnish communiques and which may yet present its " democratic " well-wishers with surprises. The Chinese people are hardly likely to allow their Government, should it be tempted, to undo the work of national salvation which began when Chiang Kai-Shek's life was spared at Sian in 1937, after his capture by patriotic troops. Turkey is reported to be far from enthusiastic at the prospect of British warships passing into the Black Sea and involving her gradually in a war with the Soviet Union. Both the Red Army and the Finnish people will say their say in good time, to the confusion of many pundits who have disposed of the Finnish People's Government, the Finnish working-class movement, the bravery, discipline, moral strength and equipment of the Red Army, and the industrial and transport achievements of the U.S.S.R. in their dashing articles from Fleet Street and dispatches from the dug-outs of Finnish White

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officers. But even stronger than these will be the effect of the sharp divisions now making themselves more and more felt here in Britain, between the misleaders and deceivers of the Labour movement on the one hand, and the mass of the working-class, led by its most active and class-conscious elements, on the other.

This cleavage is exceptionally sharp. Leaders of the Labour Party and the T.U.C., who for twelve months—until Franco was safely dug in—had their doubts about the desirability of working-class intervention on the side of the Spanish Republic, had no doubts at all, any more than Mr. Chamberlain, the *Daily Telegraph* and the *News Chronicle*, about the desirability of mobilising the working-class against the Soviet Union. People who temporarily and with many notorious back-slidings claimed to be " Left " when there was no danger of being labelled unpatriotic for so doing, have now passed by easy stages—including the phase of pretending to " win the leadership of the war away from Chamberlain "—to open and unabashed support of Chamberlain. The I.L.P. leaders, who pretended to be warning the workers against the perils of war on the U.S.S.R., now throw what little weight they still have on the side of war against the U.S.S.R., by repeating every lie peddled by the reactionary capitalist press. But working-class organisations like the London Trades Council, the Glasgow Trades Council, many district committees of the Amalgamated Engineering Union, the Building Trade Workers, the Miners, refuse to be led away by the propaganda of the capitalist press. The success of the pamphlets on Finland published by the Russia To-day Society and the Communist Party (each selling 100,000 copies) indicates that the instinctive solidarity of the British workers with their Soviet and Finnish comrades has in it an element of organisation and reasoned analysis which will get the better of the Citrines and the Attlees, no less than of the Chamberlains and the Bartletts.

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# Aspects of British "War Economy"

BY MAURICE DOBB

THREE RESPECTS IN which in Britain the economic setting of the transition to a " war economy " in 1939 differed from that in 1914 immediately spring to the mind. First, the unemployment percentage in August, 1939, was nearly 9 per cent., whereas the percentage for those trade unions that made returns of their members unemployed was only 3 per cent. in July, 1914. Secondly, the first steps in a transition to war economy had already been made in the two or three years prior to September, 1939, in the shape of a considerable expansion of the armament industries on a scale that had no parallel in the preparations that preceded the war of 1914. It is evident that not until at least six months after August, 1914, did governing circles show any comprehension of the character and magnitude of modern warfare in its repercussions on industry ; whereas between 1936 and 1939 there had at least been discussion of certain of the industrial problems of war, there had been a considerable expansion of aircraft and munitions production, and the preparation had been undertaken of a list of " reserved occupations " to avoid some of the disorganisation of industrial man-power that recruitment had caused in 1914-15. Industry was already on a semi-war footing. Thirdly, the technique of war has undergone drastic development since 1918, and the strain of war on the productive system is to-day very much greater. It has been estimated that the necessary ratio of industrial man-power in the war industries to fighting man-power is double what it was in 1914-18 (thereby doubling the importance of the production-, or factory-, basis of a modern war) ; and while Government expenditure absorbed a half of the national income in the last war, contemporary estimates state that in the present war it will need to absorb some two-thirds.

The crucial feature that distinguishes a war economy from " normal " peace-time capitalism is that while the latter operates with a permanent surplus of labour-power (Marx's " industrial reserve army "), the existence of which serves to prevent any upward pressure of wages on profits, in war-time this labour reserve is rapidly depleted by the drain of man-power into the army and into the war industries. Consequently the whole position of the labour market is transformed, and labour-surplus yields place to actual labour-scarcity (at any rate to acute scarcity of particular types of skilled labour required for war industry). It is evident that such a situation is one of extraordinary

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instability and danger for a capitalist society ; and it is from this fact that there arises the " necessity " for measures of an extraordinary character to fetter working-class organisation and action—measures which range from " neutralising " the trade unions, as was done by the notorious Treasury Agreement between the Government and the T.U.C. in March, 1915, up to the maximum-wage controls and proscription of independent working-class activity in Germany and France.

It is this factor which basically conditions the tendency to semi-Fascist forms that is inherent in modern war economies and it is to the various stages in the depletion of this labour reserve that I believe we have to look as primary determinants of the onset of these coercive developments. The unemployment which was the immediate result of war in August, 1914, with its dislocation of trade, proved to be comparatively short-lived ; and by the spring of 1915 the " visible " reserve of labour (in the sense of the registered unemployed) had dwindled to insignificant proportions. (The unemployment percentage fell to below 1 per cent., the trade union unemployment percentage in April being reported as " the lowest in 25 years.") It was at the outset of this first stage of labour-scarcity—the stage of virtual depletion of the " visible " reserve—that the Treasury Agreement was made as prelude to the Munitions Acts, under which strikes were made illegal in " essential industries," wages in war industry subjected to Government control and permission for a worker to change his job was restricted (under the " leaving certificate " system). Throughout the next three years the pressure of demand was met by drawing extensively upon reserves of female labour and drafting women on to jobs previously done by men. Altogether nearly a million additional women were drawn into industry and government dockyards, etc., and nearly 2 million into all occupations : an increase of between 40 and 50 per cent. But there were signs in the summer of 1918 that this further (or " invisible ") reserve was approaching depletion, in the sense that the possibilities of tapping further supplies of women's labour, at any rate by " normal " methods, were becoming exhausted. If this was the case, British war economy in the closing months of the last war was entering a new stage : a stage in which quite novel measures of coercion in the labour market would have become inevitable, if revolutionary changes in industry were to be averted. There were renewed complaints from employers and the Government in the summer of 1918 that wage-rates of skilled men, particularly in the aircraft industry, were rising too fast ; and a new scheme (the Embargo Scheme) for licensing employment of skilled men was only shelved because its first introduction, at Coventry, resulted in immediate strike-action against it. It was this second, more acute, stage of depletion of the labour-reserve that German economy had already reached prior to 1939, and which it had met by maximum-wage decrees, rendering it illegal for an employer to pay a higher wage even if he

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wished to. While political factors (counter-revolution against the gains of the popular front) have been a powerful factor in promoting the recent similar measures in France, the latter have clearly had similar roots in the state of the industrial reserve army. Here the evidence is not altogether clear. But there are signs that prior to the war the "visible" industrial reserve, at any rate, was much smaller than in this country, and the depletion of it by mobilisation was much more drastic than anything that occurred here. While in Britain an unemployment problem may well remain for some time in trades such as building and textiles (the present boomlet in which is probably temporary) and the consumption trades generally (for which the Government will try to reduce the demand), the calling-up of 2 million men in the near future is likely to mean that, so far as reserves available and adaptable to the expanding war industries are concerned, what I have termed the first stage of the depletion of the labour reserve will be reached by the spring. It seems probable that at this stage the Government will attempt no more than to make a pact with the trade union leaders, along the lines of the Treasury Agreement of 1915, by which money-wages are "stabilised" and strike action prohibited. Should this fail, resort will doubtless be had to more directly coercive measures, on the French and German models. At any rate, the onset of the second and more advanced stage of reserve-depletion, while not imminent in this country, will inevitably set in if the war continues beyond the current year and war production gathers momentum; and when it does there can be little doubt that not only rigid State control of wages but also measures of industrial conscription (probably christened by some other name) will become the order of the day.

Two other familiar and outstanding features of a war economy are the adoption of forms of economic organisation of a State-capitalist type (in which, however, the intervention of the State reinforces the dominance of large monopolist groups more than it supersedes the autonomy of capitalist firms), and the appearance of varying degrees of financial dislocation throughout the credit and monetary mechanism, which in its more extreme forms may amount to virtual paralysis of the normal market-forces on the operation of which capitalism relies. These latter developments, in turn, evoke extraordinary and unorthodox measures of financial policy and financial control. But the development of these two features can also be shown, I believe, to be related in large part to that modification in the basic relations of production (as represented by the state of the labour reserve) to which we have been referring. True, there are important factors that influence the introduction of war controls, other than the state of the labour market. There is the shortage of various raw materials, which in this country is primarily an import problem and lies behind the various State controls over the import and export of goods, of money and of securities; and there is also the matter of shortage of equipment (in other words,

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there is what one may call the influence of the " constant-capital reserve "). Shortages of these types constitute important bottle-neck factors ; and State controls in the form of priority lists and price controls (such as are being introduced under the Ministry of Supply) may have their roots partly in this type of shortage. This is specially the case with foreign trade. Nevertheless, there is reason to think that the position with regard to the labour reserve is a more crucial limiting factor than the shortage of capital equipment (for one thing, there is some evidence that the reserve of unused equipment capacity is nowadays proportionately larger even than the reserve of unemployed labour-power) ; and there is an important sense, I believe, in which the fundamental reason behind the extension of war-time economic controls is the desire to control wages. (In other words, in the abnormal situation where an industrial reserve army is lacking, it becomes too dangerous for capitalism to allow " normal " market forces to operate freely). But this very extension of controls, since it inevitably tends to strengthen, even to operate through, existing monopolistic interests, itself becomes a limiting factor, cramping expansion and raising prices and profits by increasing the degree of monopoly.

This same factor acts as a determining influence over the financial situation in a slightly more complicated way. In the early stages of a war the price-rising tendency is not generally very pronounced, and does not cause any serious financial disturbance. The rise that takes place is primarily caused by import difficulties and transport bottle-necks. It is not until a later stage in the development of a war economy that what can be described as real inflationary symptoms are likely to appear. In the last war it was in the early part of 1915 that a marked price-rising tendency developed (after the initial rise in August there had been a slackening and even something of a relapse) ; and it was not till 1918 (at the end of the summer) that there were signs of this inflationary tendency gathering accelerating momentum.* One factor in such a rise may be a rising money-wage-level ; and in the later stages of an inflation this may be a contributory influence—the so-called " vicious spiral." (The capitalist system has, as it were, an automatic defence-mechanism against any encroachment on profit from a rising wage-level in the shape of a spontaneous price-rise, which wholly or partly snatches away any gain of *real* wages from the working class). It is a familiar fact, however, that money wages do not lead, but on the contrary follow and lag behind, the upward movement of prices during a war (real wage-rates being *lower* than pre-war in all the four years 1914-18, and only catching up on the pre-war level in 1919). Accordingly, there must be some other factor that is both the initiating cause and the dominating influence. This basic and governing factor consists in the fall in labour produc-

*This was masked in its influence on prices at the time, both by the effect of rationing and by improved import-facilities that America's entry into the war occasioned.

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tivity that sets in when industrial equipment is intensively utilised and approaches full-capacity working. (In other words, the quantity of labour required to produce a commodity rises as machinery is used at higher pressure, overtime is worked, partly obsolete machinery is brought back into use, congestion and bottlenecks in the production process, etc., appear.) This is a factor which gathers strength in the degree that both the labour-reserve and the reserve capacity of equipment are depleted by the growing strain of war ; and there is every probability that it will be powerfully reinforced by that heightened degree of monopoly throughout the economic system to which we have already referred. In the degree that it develops, profits inevitably increase and real wages fall ; a double tendency which is inherent in the structual relations of a capitalist war economy.

But while this inflation tendency has the effect of enhancing profits, it has very damaging effects on the structure of the economy, dislocating as it may the whole monetary and credit mechanism. It is natural, therefore, to ask whether measures of financial policy cannot and will not be taken to combat it. It is true that financial policy can powerfully influence the operation of this tendency ; but it can counteract it only in so far as it has the effect of contracting either (*a*) consumption, or (*b*) normal capital accumulation in the non-war industries. As the latter to-day is small relatively to the size of armament expenditure (in 1938-39 it amounted *net* to only about £200 million, or probably less than a half of total investment), it is on consumption that most of the burden falls. For this purpose taxation is usually regarded as the surest instrument.* The issue of State loans may also tap these sources, but only in any large degree if accompanied by credit-stringency and high interest-rates, which are exactly what a borrowing government is anxious to avoid. To attack the consumption of the rich—to lop off the tallest poppies first—would seem to the ordinary man the obvious way of preventing inflation. But, as one might expect, the discussions of the question in the last two months in *The Times* and in economic journals have generally been prefaced by the statement that the practicable limit of taxation of the capitalist class is already being approached. From this the conclusion has been drawn that it is the consumption of the working class and of the lower middle class that must be reduced ; and it is clear that financial policy in the coming period will have this as its principal aim. Financial policy comes down at bottom to wage policy. And if consumption is not successfully reduced by controlling money wages (as clearly will first be tried), it will be " automatically " reduced by the upward movement of prices.

It is, perhaps, at this point relevant to quote some of the economic

*At present, of the *additional* war-expenditure about a quarter is to be raised by taxation. In the last war about a fifth of war-expenditure was raised by taxation and four-fifths by the issue of loans. Loan-finance is not *necessarily* " inflationary," but in practice it tends to be.

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estimates that have recently been current, both to show the magnitude of the war burden, and its pressure on consumption, and also to convey some idea of the extent and rapidity with which the tendencies referred to above can be expected to operate. A recent estimate of the man-power situation has suggested the following: assuming (i) a recruitment into the fighting forces of 4 million males (which is less than the peak figure during 1914-18), (ii) a *net* addition of one million to the total labour force, and (iii) a need to expand the labour force in the metal and chemical trades by 50 to 60 per cent., then the number of additional women drawn into employment would need to be 4 million.* This would require *all* single and widowed women and *one-third* of all married women between 14 and 55 to be in employment: a result that seems highly improbable without special coercive measures. It would mean that the sex ratio of female to male labour in industry, which was 56 per cent. in 1918 and is 42 per cent. to-day, would be raised to 85 per cent. Even so, this estimate assumes a considerable contraction in a number of industries, ranging from 6 per cent. in "food, drink and tobacco" and 10 per cent. in textiles and clothing to 15 per cent. in agriculture and 40 per cent. in building. If the writer's estimate of the possible female labour reserve proves too optimistic or his estimate of military recruitment or of the armament demand is too low (as seems quite probable), there will be pressure to force a contraction of the consumption industries by greater amounts than these figures show.

Other estimates made in terms of money agree in assuming that, with a net national income to-day of about £5 milliard (of which consumption represents just over £4 milliard) £3 milliard at least will need to be taken by the Government. Allowing for some increased output, a curtailment of investment in non-war industries, and the mobilising of half-a-milliard yearly by sale of gold or securities abroad, this leaves at least £1½ milliard to come from reduced consumption—in other words from a reduction of consumption by *over a third.*† The estimates proceed to suggest that about a third of this reduction must come from wage-earners and persons of small incomes.

The position at the moment is one in which the tendencies referred to above have barely as yet begun to get under weigh. The first three months of the war have seen a rise in unemployment by more than 100,000. This increase has been chiefly in trades such as paper and printing, building and contracting, the distributive trades, entertain-

**Economic Journal*, December, 1939, 656 seq. At present out of an "occupied population" of about 21 million no more than 9 million are in manufacturing and extractive industries, and a further 1½ million are in transport. Of the remainder about 6 million are in central and local government, banking and finance, commerce and personal service, and rather less than a million are in the various middle-class professions.

†Cf. J. M. Keynes, *The Economic Journal*, December, 1939; E. F. M. Durbin, *How to Pay for the War*; R. W. B. Clarke, *The Economic Effort of War*. The Chancellor of the Exchequer has estimated the present rate of expenditure at approximately £2.4 milliard a year.

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ments, the catering trades and the professions ; while mining, chemicals, metals, engineering, shipbuilding and even the textile and clothing trades have shown a fall in unemployment. In the trades where employment has expanded there has probably also been some increase of earnings due to overtime working.* (It is to be noted that the cases where unemployment has risen are for the most part "*non-factory*" occupations, while the main "factory-industries" have shown an increase of activity and of earnings.) Over the same period the official index of the cost of living has shown a rise of 12 per cent. ; while increases in money wages amounting to about 2 to 3 per cent. of the total wages bill have taken place, covering about 2 to 2½ million workers, principally in mining, iron and steel, engineering and shipbuilding and textiles (in their case representing an average increase of about 9 or 10 per cent. in earnings). What seems likely to occur in the next few months is further contraction of earnings and employment in trades such as building, paper and printing, catering trades and the food industries ; and later a relapse in textiles, clothing and woodworking. The position will be complex rather than simple : the fact that the Government is developing a campaign to reduce consumption may well mean an increase in unemployment in the consumption trades parallel to the appearance of symptoms of labour shortage in the war industries, the former being deliberately used as a lever to force transfer and ease the pressure of the latter. Meanwhile, as in the last war, large-scale expansion, accompanied by dilution and the introduction of female labour, is to be expected in the metal and engineering and chemical trades. But the appearance of pronounced inflationary symptoms, or of openly coercive measures in the labour market, is probably not to be expected until a somewhat later stage.

A word remains to be said about the international position. The main weaknesses of German war economy are well known : her lack of gold and of foreign securities and very limited possibilities of foreign credits ; her inability to import certain "key" commodities such as nickel, tin, tungsten, phosphates, vanadium and molybdenum, and to a less extent lack of copper and of rubber† ; and the depletion of her labour-reserve (against which has to be set the possibilities of drafting in reserves from conquered territories and the fact that the development of her war industries and her organisation of economic controls, especially control of wages, had already reached a much

*The extent of this is impossible to estimate since the Ministry of Labour has now ceased publication of its monthly data about changes of earnings in certain industries.

†There are also deficiencies of cotton and wool and vegetable oils, the seriousness of which depends on the limits to curtailing consumption. In many estimates Germany's raw material deficiency has been much exaggerated, and with it the probable effects of the blockade. With pressure on Rumania, for example, and economies of civilian consumption, available oil looks like being adequate for anything but the military requirements of a continuous and high-pressure offensive. In the case of metals most estimates seem to under-estimate the possibilities of increased utilisation of scrap.

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higher stage than elsewhere by September). Great Britain, by contrast, has much larger reserves both of gold and of foreign securities, usable as a reserve for financing imports, and some limited possibilities of importing on credit, even if these are much more limited than in 1914-18.* As against this she relies on import for nearly every major raw material (except coal) and for two-thirds of her food supplies (against one-fifth in Germany's case).†

During the last war Britain purchased some £4 milliard of imports of which three-quarters had to be paid for by exports ("visible" and "invisible"), and one-quarter was met by the sale of foreign investments. At present little more than a half of imports are paid for by commodity exports, the remainder being met by "invisible" items, of which the most important consists of interest on foreign investments. This "invisible" revenue is likely to be reduced rather than increased, with a sale of foreign securities and a decline of shipping income received from abroad. This means that exports will have to be expanded even to maintain import-capacity at its present level, and expanded in markets where Britain in the past two decades has been losing ground. As we have seen, one estimate suggests that £$\frac{1}{2}$ milliard of additional imports annually might be procured by sale of gold and securities. But this seems hardly a figure that is capable of being sustained for more than a year or two ; and to judge from a recent speech of Mr. Chamberlain the Government looks like being loath to weaken its imperialist position by using this reserve—"lest it should prove to be a long war." At present the export of capital or withdrawal of money-balances held by foreigners in London is controlled (very ineffectively, however, up to now, since the *ownership* of the balances can still be transferred, e.g., by being sold abroad to purchasers of British exports who need to buy sterling with which to effect payment) ; and some bulk-buying of imports is being undertaken. But to develop an export drive adequate to the situation large encroachments on the "normal" workings of capitalism would be required, in the shape of rigorous State regimentation of export trade as in Germany in recent years ; and for such developments British war economy is at present quite unprepared. Moreover, it would require a concerted policy (similar to the German in S.E. Europe) of pressure, both economic and political, on neutral countries. To such a campaign British war economy will doubtless be driven by the pressure of events ; and in this everything clearly depends on its success in actively associating with it the U.S.A., on the one hand, and leading Scandinavian and Mediterranean countries on the other hand. This raises political issues and conflicts of the highest importance which, however, go beyond the boundaries of this article.

*Actually there was no *net* borrowing by Britain in the last war : while she borrowed £1,350 million from U.S.A., she lent £1,450 million to the Allies.

†Out of an import total of some £900 million in 1938, nearly £700 million represented some form of raw materials or "food, drink and tobacco."

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It is a common-place that in war-time the class issue is enormously accentuated and the class struggle assumes quite new and more acute forms. In this sense war economy represents a special type of crisis for capitalism: a crisis associated, not with unemployment and a swelling of the industrial reserve army, but with the depletion of this reserve, and a consequential pressure evoking increased regimentation of labour—with increased employment and the working of overtime, increased intensity of labour and the attraction of increased money earnings for important sections of the workers, but at the same time reduction of working class consumption and the tying of the worker to a particular job and his increasing subjection to an employer (in France this has already assumed something of the character of industrial serfdom). For the capitalist class it is a crisis which is associated with greater profits,* but at the same time greater dangers and extraordinary instabilities. While it may "solve" certain problems for capitalism, it creates entirely novel ones at the same time. In periods of peace-time expansion capitalism can often blur the sharp lines of the class struggle by conceding improved conditions out of the larger total product: in war-time, on the contrary, it is faced with the necessity of drastically reducing the workers' standards at the same time as more work is demanded of them. A special feature of the situation is that the position of the "aristocracy of labour" is particularly undermined (the higher grades in the last war often suffering proportionately more than the lower).

But it will not be alone the working class on whom the burden will fall. The middle class will suffer, and many of them *proportionately* more. Salaried and professional people, whose incomes are usually rigid in terms of money and are seldom revised, will be specially hit by any inflation; they are unorganised for the most part and unused to collective action; and it is on them that the largest proportional increases in taxation under Sir John Simon's budget fall. Shopkeepers, farmers and small business people will suffer in a different way, coming as they will increasingly under the dominance of the big monopoly groups, and suffering probably in much the same way as such sections have suffered in Germany under the Nazi régime. The question of where the burden of the war shall fall raises the class issue in the clearest form. It is for the workers to demand that it be placed upon the propertied class, and not on the working class, who are already bearing the brunt of war conditions both in the trenches and in the

*As yet, of course, it is too early to discern this tendency from the published returns of companies. The profit-returns for November, analysed by *The Economist*, actually show a slight fall on a year ago. This is because profit-returns reflect *past* results and not contemporary events, and the present figures are still influenced by the relapse of business in 1938. As *The Economist* comments: "Past profits provide no evidence of current or future trends," even though it is confident that "a profits inflation is on the way" (Cf., *Economist*, November 14 and December 16, 1939). Moreover, even when such a "profits-inflation" is well on the way, it may be obscured in company-returns by the building up of reserves or by a practice of over-valuation of assets (which amounts to the creation of hidden reserves).

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factory. But they need also to be on their guard against the burden falling upon them in the form of inflation ; and because of this danger it is for them to advance the positive demand that the consumption of the rich must be cut down instead of resort being had to inflationary methods of war finance. This is a matter that vitally affects the middle class as well, whose fright of inflation and readiness to believe that its cause is rising wages may well be used to stampede the middle class and drive a wedge between them and the workers. Yet both these sections have a common interest in a campaign to see that the burden is placed on the broadest backs where it belongs. In the last war organisation spread to women workers : it is for trade unionists, among other things, to see that it spreads this time *both* to the large sections of unorganised wage-earners *and* to the salaried and professional grades and large sections of the middle class as well.

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# The Labour Movement Discusses the War

## BY J. R. CAMPBELL

WE ARE IN the midst of the Second World War—a war in which millions of people now living are threatened with physical destruction ; a war in which the accumulated labour of generations of workers will be destroyed; a war which threatens the destruction of existing political liberties ; a war which threatens to extend to involve a counter-revolutionary attack against the Soviet Union.

A Second World War in a generation is in itself an expression of the mortal crisis of that capitalist system which the Labour movement professes to be out to supersede. Has the Labour movement any message for humanity groping its way forward in the black-out of this terrific crisis ? Or has the Labour movement no distinctive message, no way forward for humanity ? Has its professed internationalism to go into cold storage for the duration of the war, and have the rank and file men and women who have devoted their lives to the cause of the workers to join with their own ruling class in denouncing the ruling class and the people of Nazi Germany, in denouncing the victorious workers in the Union of Socialist Soviet Republics ?

These are the questions which are arising in the great debate on the war which is now developing in every section of the Labour movement. A big mobilisation of the pro-war officials is taking place in every district of the country. The majority of the Labour M.P.s are mobilised in South Wales against the powerful anti-war forces in the South Wales Miners' Federation. The Lord Provost of Glasgow, Mr. P. J. Dollan, who changed from a supporter of the war into a conscientious objector in the last war, is seeking to mobilise the forces of reaction in Scotland against anyone in the Labour movement who has the temerity to change his mind with regard to this war. Certain large trade unions whose officials prefer flourishing the big stick to indulging in argument, are threatening to withhold affiliation fees from any Trades Council or local Labour Party which dares to come out against the war. All this is a sign that a discussion of fundamental importance has commenced and that influential pro-war elements are already fearful of the results of that discussion.

There is one assumption that we must dispose of at the outset. It is said that those Labour bodies which come out against the war are opposing official Labour Party policy as approved of repeatedly at Party Conferences. It is necessary to say that this is completely

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untrue. No Labour Party Conference has as yet approved of this war. They have in the past approved of a policy of collective security directed against Fascist aggression, but the argument that because they have done so they ought to support the present war is an assumption that has got to be proved. It is by no means a self-evident truth. The Trade Union Congress on the other hand did approve of the present war. But a Trade Union Congress in 1936 approved of the policy of non-intervention in Spain. It is possible for Trade Union Congresses to be mistaken.

Another equally unwarranted assumption is that the present discussion is only developing because the Communists have changed their policy and therefore want everyone else to change too. If the Communists think that they have valid reasons for changing their policy the other sections of the Labour movement will be interested to hear them. It may be that they will find the reasons to be equally valid. But in sober fact the discussion has broken out in quarters entirely uninfluenced by the Communists. It is a discussion stimulated by the facts of the war itself.

### *Our Experience Last Time*

The Labour Movement should not be entirely without experience in this situation. This is the second World War and the mechanism of the first World War has been most completely laid bare by the leading statesmen and soldiers who took part in it. Although the motives of these gentry in compiling their memoirs was self-justification, and not objective analysis, their work possesses considerable value. The *Daily Herald* evidently thought so when it distributed Lloyd George's war memoirs amongst its registered readers. We recommend a critical re-perusal of that work to those members of the *Herald* staff who seem to be bitten by raving jingoism.

One of the things which emerges from a critical re-reading of such works is the yawning gulf between the aims of the imperialist statesmen who prepared and carried through the last war, and the highly idealistic purposes pinned on to the war by intellectuals and sometimes adopted by the statesmen as a means of deceiving the people. "Jacky" Fisher preparing the Grand Fleet to drive the Germans from the seas, Lord Haldane preparing the Expeditionary Force for France, Sir Edward Grey, Asquith and others preparing the diplomatic line-up were not preparing for a "war to end war," but for a war to down a rival imperialism. But when the war for which they were preparing came they did not contradict Mr. H. G. Wells when he suggested that it might be made a "war to end war." If well-meaning idealists rushed to provide high-falutin moral camouflage for an ordinary imperialist massacre the politicians who had prepared for the massacre had no reason to object. When people equally well meaning proclaimed that the war was for democracy, the Allied statesmen

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busily engaged in framing secret treaties, in inducing Italy to come in to the war and grab other people's territory, had no objection to this excellent smokescreen being put up. True, when the war was over and a vindictive imperialist peace (which had been the real aim of the Allied statesmen throughout) emerged, the idealists complained that they had been basely deceived.

Undoubtedly the statesmen on both sides engaged in an unconscionable amount of deception but it is unfair to accuse them of deceiving the thousands of well-meaning people who had proclaimed that it was a "war for high ideals." For those people had in many cases deceived themselves. Without for a moment analysing the fundamental causes of the war, without asking the question "Given the capitalist system, given the capitalist class as the ruling class, what purpose can it be pursuing in this war?"—they promptly pinned their own subjective ideals on to the war machine of Imperialism and then complained that it had not functioned in order to realise these ideals. The thorough-going imperialists might reasonably have retorted that they did not build the war machine for this purpose and that if anyone thought they had that was an unfortunate, though useful, misunderstanding.

It is now generally agreed in the British Labour Movement that the last war was an imperialist war, generated by the decaying capitalist system, that it was fought around the question of the division of colonies and semi-colonies in the world and that those who thought otherwise were duped by the war propagandists, when they did not dupe themselves.

### *Why This War?*

The awful questions must therefore arise in the mind of every serious man and woman "Are we being fooled about this present war? Are we fooling ourselves about this present war?"

When we think of it we see that the fundamental traits of this war are those of an imperialist war. It is conducted by three great states in the hands of monopoly capitalists. Before those states engaged in military warfare with each other they were locked in economic warfare with each other—tariff against tariff, subsidy against subsidy. The intensified rearmament heralding the coming war emerged directly out of the economic crisis of 1929-33. The first move to seriously break the uneasy peace which had existed since the Armistice of 1918 was made by Japan in 1931. On September 10, 1931, Lord Cecil was telling the League of Nations' Twelfth Assembly that "there has scarcely even been a period of history when war seems less likely than it does at present." Eight days later Japan opened her Manchurian campaign and the march of the second world war commenced. It does seem that this war is an imperialist war once we examine its origin and development. How do the leaders of the Labour movement face up to this question?

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" The war has arisen," says Mr. Attlee, " because there exists in Europe a country the rulers of which have resolved to use force in order to achieve their moral and political objects. These men reject all moral consideration and have no regard to treaties or obligations. They reject in fact the elementary conditions necessary to a civilised existence. The real cause of war is not the invasion of Poland but the challenge to civilisation." Here is the conventional picture of the Nazi gangster operating in a world of shrinking Quakers. The gangster is there all right, but the Quaker characteristics of the other states are a figment of Mr. Attlee's imagination.

In a later part of the same speech Mr. Attlee says : " Civilisation is threatened with destruction because men have so far been unable to control the results of their own inventions." In other words, the cause of war is not the existence of German rulers who " reject all moral considerations," but the existence of capitalist anarchy of which those rulers and the rulers of France and Britain are the expression.

Mr. Herbert Morrison, in a broadcast speech, after blaming the rulers of Germany goes on to declare " the freedom of private business is often another name for economic anarchy—which has always led to war and always will."

Now the membership of the Labour Party must ask themselves which of those statements is to be the basis of their policy. If the cause of war is that the rulers of the enemy country are people without moral scruples, then of course we must direct our energy against those people. But to accept that is to accept the conventional humbug which is used to deceive the people in every war. Undoubtedly, enemy politicians are frequently without scruple in international affairs, but the subsequent history of the war generally shows up our own politicians as people of a similar calibre. If, however, the cause of war is capitalist anarchy then we must direct our struggle against those upholders of capitalist anarchy who are nearest to us—namely, the ruling class in our own country. An examination of the Labour Party's practice shows that its whole policy is based on the resolutely non-Socialist assumption, that the cause of war is the wicked rulers in the enemy country who have got to be fought—the conventional deception in all imperialist wars. The phrases about capitalist anarchy are only introduced to give a Socialist flavour to an otherwise nauseating imperialist mixture.

### *Is This War Non-Imperialist?*

The Labour leaders, however, are endeavouring to prove that this is a different non-imperialist type of war from any which have taken place in the past and that the Labour Movement is especially interested in carrying this war through to a successful conclusion. The following are amongst the arguments which are now being put forward.

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(1) This is not British Imperialism's war. Chamberlain, the representative of British Imperialism, refused up to the last moment to oppose Nazi aggression. This is a war forced upon British Imperialism by the people of Great Britain who refused to tolerate further surrenders to Fascist aggression. The Labour movement is entitled to say "This is our war." (This is the argument of Mr. Brailsford in *Reynolds*.)

(2) This is a war for the principles of the League of Nations which have been trampled underfoot by Nazi Germany.

(3) The existence of Fascism in Germany makes a difference. "Think of it, you people of our cities and towns and villages," cries Herbert Morrison, "government by uniform: government by the rubber truncheon, the gun, and the concentration camp; every newspaper a mere megaphone for some gutter press Goebbels of our own. . . . . Peoples as jealous as we have been struck down. This is a real threat."

(4) A more fundamental issue than that of Nazi Imperialism versus British Imperialism has arisen in this war. It is the issue of Western Civilisation (represented inadequately by the Governments of Chamberlain and Daladier) versus the Nazi (and a growing number of voices would add the Soviet) reversion to barbarism.

Let us take first the prevalent argument that, as the British Labour movement supported the League of Nations, it must logically support the present war which is being waged to defend "the rule of law," "collective action against aggression," "the submission of disputes to arbitration" and other League principles. This is the central argument of those who want Labour to support the war.

Here we must clearly distinguish between the support given to the League of Nations by the various imperialist governments and the support given to it by idealists of various shades.

The imperialist governments who built up the League in 1918 were primarily concerned with building up an organisation of victors and neutrals, which would act as a rallying point of all capitalist elements against the advancing Socialist revolution in Europe, and which would give a measure of international sanction to the peace settlement, which had not been negotiated but forcibly imposed on the Germans. The League as formed was a counter-revolutionary instrument. The frontiers that it existed to defend were the outcome of a dictated peace on Germany and counter-revolutionary intervention against Soviet Russia. There was nothing just or democratic or Socialist about those frontiers.

It is true that certain League "Utopians" believed that a new organisation of the utmost importance had been born. These theorists —and they were numerous amongst the ex-Liberal intellectuals who had flocked into the Labour Party—did not conduct a searching enquiry into the real causes of war. They assumed that it would be possible

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to develop this international organisation, the League, to induce the Governments composing it to apply certain Liberal principles—arbitration, etc.—to all questions in dispute between states and to gradually build up a world public opinion and a body of regulations to which all states would conform.

The hard-faced imperialists operating the League let the theorists have a certain amount of rope, allowed them to play about in committees and conferences but in point of fact were never at any time prepared to conduct their relations with other states on the basis of the so-called League principles.

"We must have a Government in Germany which will respect the sanctity of treaties" chant the Labour war enthusiasts. There have never been any such governments in capitalist countries. The rule of all capitalist governments is only to respect treaties when superior force or self-interest compels them to do so. Less than ten years ago a British Government, in which the present Prime Minister was Chancellor of the Exchequer, refused to continue to repay its debt to America. France did the same. Are the British and French Governments to be trusted to honour their obligations when it is contrary to their interest to do so?

"We must enforce the principle of arbitration in disputes between nations" we are told. No British Government has ever accepted this principle. It is within the memory of everyone how the British Government refused to arbitrate with the Irish Free State on the question of land annuities if the arbiter was drawn from outside the British Empire, and resorted to economic war in an endeavour to compel Ireland to submit to its will. The so-called League principles were never accepted by the governments of France and Britain. They cannot, therefore, be defending them against Germany to-day.

When the Soviet Union entered the League of Nations it did so without illusions. It did not believe that the League was capable of uprooting the causes of war, or that the Imperialists in the League were concerned with applying League principles. But it did know that there were imperialist interests in the League (the French particularly) who were not interested in unloosing a new imperialist war. It believed that it was possible to build up a combination—on the basis of immediate interests—between the Soviet Union and imperialist governments which would preserve peace by holding the German and Italian Fascist aggressors in check. The Soviet Union, in doing so, was not enamoured by the European *status quo*. It was less enamoured, however, by the war which the Fascist states were then preparing, a war which might cost millions of lives and lead to greater injustices and oppressions than before. Its whole policy was directed to saving humanity from this war.

As is well-known, the British Government stood for the opposite policy of "appeasement" and ultimately forced the French Govern-

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ment to accept it also. This policy was based on the assumption that German Imperialism must expand and that it was in the interests of British Imperialism that the expansion should be encouraged and directed against the state which the Nazis had designated as Public Enemy Number One—the Soviet Union. Though couched in pacifist phrases the essence of appeasement was to unloose war—against the Spanish Republic, against Czech democracy, against the Soviet Union. To help forward this policy the British (and later the French imperialists) dismantled the League of Nations, stone by stone.

At the time that this policy was being operated there were grave misunderstandings amongst the Labour and Progressive forces as to its meaning. We had talk about Chamberlain sacrificing imperial interests to class interests. This was incorrect. The policy of appeasement aimed at a 100 per cent. defence of the positions of French and British Imperialism (and even at the strengthening and extension of these positions) to be secured by the promotion of a war of exhaustion between Germany and the Soviet Union, to be followed later by Franco-British intervention against both. In order to force Germany to pursue this policy, however, a powerfully linked French and British Imperialism was necessary. If Germany preferred to attack France and Britain rather than the Soviet Union, the Western Imperialists were ready for it.

This policy of " appeasement " was rightly condemned and opposed by the Labour movement, although the refusal to build a Peace Alliance of Labour and Progressive organisations in Great Britain to lead a fight against it completely sabotaged the effectiveness of the opposition. It was a thousand times correct to oppose British Imperialism's policy of co-operating with Nazi Germany to unloose a new war ; it was a thousand times right to struggle to prevent the destruction of democratic ramparts like Czechoslovakia which stood in the way of German Imperialism's drive to the East. The Trotskyists and Pacifists who opposed the policy of collective resistance to this aggression were in fact applauding the destruction of the last barriers in the path of the war-mongers. They were applauding the preparation of a full-blooded imperialist attack against the Soviet Union.

But there can be no greater deception of the people than to assert that this present war of British and French Imperialism against Nazi Germany is a logical outcome of Labour's policy of collective resistance to Fascist aggression. That policy was never at any time adopted by the British Government. In the negotiations with the Soviet Union in August, 1939, we find the British Government still resisting the organisation of effective collective resistance to aggression ; supporting (or rather encouraging) the Poles to refuse the entry of Soviet troops into Poland ; supporting (or rather encouraging) the Baltic States and Finland in their refusal to give the Soviet Union those naval and air bases which would enable it to play its part in a genuine Peace Front.

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When Mr. John Jagger, M.P., tells us that the Soviet Union " clamoured for a pact of non-aggressive states to resist all aggression, and when at length France and Britain had been converted to her point of view she lined up secretly with the chief of all aggressors, and announced a pact which shocked the whole world " (*New Dawn*, December 23, 1939), he seems to be unaware that his central thesis that Britain and France had been converted to the Soviet Union's point of view lacks all confirmation. The Soviet Union's point of view was expressed in the demands she put forward during the Moscow negotiations, which were emphatically refused by the British and French negotiators. Is not the British Government going to publish a blue book glorying in this fact and seeking to justify it?

This war is therefore not the outcome of Labour's policy of collective resistance to aggression. It is the outcome of the British Government's " appeasement " policy, of its prolonged resistance to the policy of the Peace Front. The literature of the advocates of the Peace Front predicted that this war would come if the British Government persisted in its policy of encouraging aggression. It did persist in that policy and war has come. It is Chamberlain's war and not the war of the Labour movement which opposed his policy.

The argument is sometimes produced that surely the fact that Britain is now at war with Germany is decisive enough proof that the British Government is now resisting Fascist aggression. This argument overlooks the two-fold character of the appeasement policy. That policy was aimed at the 100 per cent. defence of British imperialist interests against any threat from Nazi Germany or Fascist Italy. It hoped to ensure this defence by inciting Germany against the Soviet Union, but if this failed then British Imperialism was ready to tackle Germany, not in the interests of resistance to Fascist aggression but in defence of its Empire, of its right to rule over millions of colonial slaves. From March till August, 1939, the British Government, while dragging out negotiations with the Soviet Union, was engaged in all kinds of appeasement moves with Nazi Germany (the Hudson-Wohltat conversations for example).

The Soviet-German Pact was the outward and visible sign that Nazi Germany was refusing to attack the Soviet Union and was preparing to attack British and French imperialist interests. It was then that British Imperialism (dragging French Imperialism with it) fell back on the second aspect of its policy—that of armed struggle against German Imperialism.

It reaffirmed its pledges to Poland because, if the struggle with German Imperialism was due, it would be better that it should commence on an issue that appeared remote from British imperialist interests. This would enable the Government to play on all the feelings aroused by the left forces about Fascist aggression and the defence of the independence of the peoples; it would give British and French

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Imperialism an Eastern Front for a time (for few anticipated such a speedy collapse in Poland) ; and it might willy-nilly drag the Soviet Union into British Imperialism's war, for it was clear that the Soviet Union could not tolerate a German advance to its old frontiers.

The writer is not denouncing the many genuine anti-imperialists in the Labour movement for being mistaken about this war. He was mistaken himself. What were the basic mistakes ? (1) We regarded certain tactics of British Imperialism in seeking to defend itself against Nazi Germany, i.e., the tactic of diverting Germany to the East, as fixed, long-term tactics. Hence, after Germany had signed the Pact with the Soviet Union and abandoned the drive to the East for the time being, we kept on warning the people against the danger of a " second Munich," although the central meaning of the Munich policy was the diversion of Germany against the Soviet Union. With the signing of the Soviet-German pact a new Munich had no immediate meaning for British Imperialism. (2) We regarded the tactics of the Soviet Union and of the Communist International as being fixed long-term tactics, and not tactics adapted to a situation which had been terminated by the definitive refusal of British Imperialism to adhere to a real peace front. That refusal not only led the Soviet Union to sign the pact with Germany. It also resulted in British Imperialism deciding to try conclusions in an imperialist war—an imperialist war, however, in a different world situation from 1914-18. This we failed to see. The possibilities of a Peace Front were dead, but we proceeded to transfer the phrases of the Peace Front to the war which had commenced in consequence of British Imperialism's refusal to have a Peace Front. That is what many supporters of the Peace Front in the Labour Party are still doing.

I understand that the Welsh mining M.P.s who support the war are asking the question what change can have taken place in the situation since last August, when we were clamouring for the establishment of a Peace Front against aggression, that we should now oppose the war against the Fascist aggressors. Surely the answer leaps to the tongue. Chamberlain opposed the establishment of the Peace Front, and continued his policy of diverting Germany against the Soviet Union. The Nazis, however, flinched from attacking the Soviet Union, which was thus enabled to conclude a non-aggression pact with them.

The change consisted in the fact that from the signing of the Pact the Chamberlain policy of appeasement at the Soviet Union's expense was smashed to smithereens, the Peace Front was no longer possible, and the Labour movement should have faced the fact that Chamberlain's policy had resulted in an imperialist war, which was not a continuation of the Peace Front policy but on the contrary the direct consequence of the sabotage of the Peace Front by Chamberlain.

Perhaps the most miserable trick being played by the Labour supporters of the war is that connected with " Labour's Peace Aims."

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All over the country the Labour chiefs are holding delegate meetings at which the "six principles of peace" as laid down by Mr. Attlee in his speech to the Labour M.P.s are explained. The explanation of these six principles is often accompanied by considerable demagogic criticism of the National Government. The Conference is then asked to vote for or against the six principles and if it votes for it is held to have registered a decision in favour of the present Imperialist War.

The six principles may be summarised as follows: (1) No dictated peace; (2) the right of all nations to live and develop their own characteristic civilisation; (3) the settlement of all disputes by negotiation or arbitration; (4) protection of all minority rights; (5) recognition of an international authority superior to the national states; and (6) abandonment of Imperialism.

Apart from the fact that no one of the above principles could be applied to a society whose basis is monopoly capitalism, it is perfectly certain that not a single one of them is accepted even in words by the National Government. And yet workers are deluded into voting for these pious principles and their vote is interpreted as a vote in favour of supporting a robber war with which these principles have nothing to do. The Labour leaders are thus engaged in deluding their followers that the gigantic war machine in Britain controlled by the most reactionary British Imperialists is engaged in fighting, not for the predatory principles of British Imperialism, but for "the abandonment of Imperialism," for peace on earth and goodwill to all men.

### *Does Fascism Make a Difference?*

A favourite game of the same leaders is to quote from what the Communist leaders said about Nazism in the past in order to suggest that the Communists in refusing to support this war have in some way or other abandoned the fight against Fascism, leaving those Labour leaders who supported non-intervention in Spain as the sole heroic defenders of democracy.

Now the Communists have no reason to withdraw their main characterisations of Fascism. But the question before the Labour movement to-day is not whether Fascism is a loathsome thing or not, but the question "from whence comes the danger of Fascism to the British people?" In the past it undoubtedly came from the policy of the Chamberlain Government in encouraging German aggression. Hence the defeat of democracy in Spain and Czechoslovakia. The Communists did all in their power to defeat this policy, but in the new situation it is becoming clear that the main danger of Fascism to-day lies in the attempt of British Imperialism to regiment the people for war. For there can be no doubt that from the point of view of waging an imperialist war a Fascist capitalist economy has certain advantages over a capitalist economy that is not yet Fascist. That is one reason why as the war develops there emerges the tendency

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in the so-called democratic states to Fascist methods of political repression and of labour regulation. Hence, the emasculation of the French Parliament, and the introduction of a series of measures of labour regulation such as the arbitrary fixing of wages at the pre-war level, compulsory arbitration, industrial conscription and other measures hitherto confined to the Fascist states. And Nazi Germany and near-Fascist France are held up to the British people as examples to be followed.

"Two-thirds of the consumption of the people of this country," says Chamberlain, "is by those who have only small incomes and therefore I say it is necessary that they too should make their sacrifice as is done not only in totalitarian Germany, but also in the great democracy of France." The difference between Chamberlain and the Labour leaders appears to be that Chamberlain wants the imperialist war to go on and demands that those who favour this war shall make the necessary sacrifices, while the Labour leaders, who want this imperialist war to go on, and who want the Imperialists to retain control of it, pretend that this can take place without any worsening and even with an improvement in the conditions of the workers.

As the resistance of the workers to the reduction in their standard of life grows, political repression will grow also. In Britain, as in France, the Labour leadership by their attacks on the Communists and the anti-war forces generally are clearing the way for the adoption of repressive measures which may first be applied to the Communists, but will assuredly be extended to the trade union movement.

Therefore to genuinely resist Fascist tendencies in Britain means to fight against the imperialist war which is enormously strengthening such tendencies.

But how stands the question of democracy versus Fascism in the international sphere? It is well known that both groups of Imperialists are seeking to work round each other's flanks, to extend the war to Finland, Scandinavia and the Balkans; that for this purpose British and French Imperialism are seeking to pull Fascist Italy into the war. This reduces the fight against aggression to an absurdity, for it is clear that Mussolini will only come in on the basis of being offered territorial concessions at the expense of other peoples.

In England the most reactionary section of the Conservatives has come to the front and claimed individual control of the war-machine. A puppet of the Brass Hats has been installed in the War Ministry, a big business administrator controls the Board of Trade, every key position in the machinery of state control is in the hands of big business executives. The camouflage of "British democracy" is wearing terribly thin. In France the big industrialists, the reactionary clericals, the high officers in the army are playing a bigger and more open rôle than ever before. Both French and British reaction is seeking the aid of Mussolini against the Soviet Union as well as against Nazi

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Germany. How can anyone say that this is in any way a war for democracy against Fascism?

*The Defence of Western Civilisation*

What is the "Western Civilisation" for which the British imperialists are alleged to be fighting? Mr. G. D. H. Cole tells us that this Western Civilisation "does embody certain values which it is vitally important to preserve—a certain liberty of speech and writing and personal conduct, a certain tolerance of differences of opinion, and not least a certain culture and way of living that will not easily be reproduced if they are once destroyed." (War Aims, p. 11.)

What is being done here is evident. Out of the complex of Western imperialist civilisation certain values (won by the bourgeoisie in its progressive period and menaced by the bourgeoisie in the period of its decadence) are arbitrarily selected and labelled "Western Civilisation." The economic basis of this civilisation, namely predatory monopoly capitalism, is ignored, its widespread economic crises, its colonial repressions, its depressed areas, its bloated militarism are glossed over, and the representatives of British and French Imperialism are represented as fighting for the values left over from the progressive past of the bourgeoisie. How can any Labour man be so blind as to imagine that Chamberlain and Daladier are engaged, not in defending the central positions of decaying imperialism, but only of certain progressive values?

Now it is unquestionably true that these progressive achievements are trodden underfoot by Nazism, but that is only the expression of the fact that capitalism in the period of its decline is engaged in undermining all the achievements of its progressive past. Undoubtedly Nazism is a menace to certain values of Western civilisation, but the immediate and direct menace is the development of Fascist tendencies by the British Imperialists in connection with the present war. To present Chamberlain as the defender of those "values" of civilisation that are worth defending is folly. It is precisely from Chamberlain that the attack on those values is most likely to come.

Not only the centrists in the Labour movement (Messrs. Brailsford and Cole) seem to be concerned with pinning the "defence of Western Civilisation" on to the war chariot of allied Imperialism but the same phrase is to be found more and more on the lips of Fascist Italy, Spain, and Portugal, and of the Vatican diplomacy which co-operates with them over a wide field. Unlike the blockheads amongst the Labour intellectuals, the reactionary elements listed above, do not see in the present policy of the Soviet Union a "betrayal of Socialism" but on the contrary a policy increasing the danger of social revolution in Europe. They regard Bolshevism as Public Enemy Number One, and Nazi Germany as being ill-advised in its refusal to play an open anti-Soviet game at this stage. Those anti-Soviet

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forces are being strongly encouraged by British Imperialism. They strongly favour a united capitalist crusade against the Soviet Union. Naturally, they do not want to march forward under the slogan of " capitalism versus socialism," nor is the slogan of " democracy versus dictatorship " an appropriate one for them and so they are inclined to accept the slogan of " Western Civilisation (a designation wide enough to cover Parliamentary, Fascist and Half-Fascist capitalist states) versus Asiatic Barbarism." Those Labour men who are playing about with the concept of " Western Civilisation " are thus in danger of preparing the way for a war of the rotten, corrupt, Western Imperialism against the Soviet Union.

### *The Lesson of Finland*

Where all this is leading is seen in a copy of the *Daily Express* of January 11, which lies before me as I write. On page 2 there is a map with the caption " Seven Nations Sending Help for War Against Bolshevism." (Not be it noted war for " Finnish Democracy." That humbug has been dropped and the purpose of the war, i.e., " against Bolshevism," is clearly stated). On the map ships marked U.S.A., Britain, Norway, France, Sweden, Italy and Spain appear. On the same page there is an account of how Fascist officers in full uniform are volunteering at the Finnish Legation in Rome. On page 12 there is the headline " Citrine chosen to visit Finland." Here you have an unsurpassed picture of where support of British Imperialism has led the British Labour movement. The British Labour leaders are lining up their forces alongside those of the Italian legionaries for the " war against Bolshevism " or in plainer English against Socialism in the Soviet Union. Surely the rank and file who see their leaders sinking deeper in this filthy morass of imperialist corruption can now see that they are on the wrong road, and that continuance along this road can only lead to the acceleration of a Fascist victory in Britain.

In their speeches the Labour leaders are trying to play the trump card " How can we call for the ending of the war with Germany and at the same time support the war of the Soviet Union against Finland ? " If those Labour leaders could think for a single moment not in terms of " aggression and non-aggression " (as interpreted of course by British Imperialism) they would see that the action of the Soviet Union in supporting the Finnish People's Government, headed by Otto Kuusinen, is a tremendously important part in the struggle against the imperialist war. It is precisely because the Imperialists are endeavouring to extend the war to Scandinavia and Northern Europe, that the Soviet Union had to rescue the Finnish people from the grip of the Tanner-Mannerheim clique, which is the puppet of Anglo-French Imperialism. It is precisely because the Soviet Union is pulling Finland out of the imperialist war and because its victory will strengthen the Scandinavian workers in their struggle against those who want

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to draw Norway, Sweden and Denmark into war, that the British imperialists are manifesting the most extreme hatred of the Soviet Union. It is precisely because a victory of the Soviet Union would strengthen those forces in the Balkan countries which are seeking at one and the same time to prevent Italian aggression and to prevent their countries from being drawn into the war, that Signor Mussolini joins British Imperialism in furious denunciations of the Soviet Union. It is because the Finnish workers when they elect their new Government will probably draw Finland out of the area of capitalist exploitation that a united front of capitalism has been formed against the Soviet Union and against the liberation of Finland. Yet a section of the British Labour leadership has sunk so low that they cheer the horrible prospect of the continuation and extension of the imperialist war and curse the prospect of the extension of the area of Socialism.

Is it not clear that continued support of the imperialist war will transform the British Labour movement into one of the dark reactionary forces of the world, a force co-operating with pro-Fascist toryism, with the plutocratic militarist dictatorship in France, with Italian Fascism, with Vatican diplomacy against the Soviet Union? Those forces stand for no Socialist objective. The dismemberment of Germany, the restoration of the Hapsburg monarchy, the Italian domination of the Balkans, the advance to clericalism and to Fascism is openly inscribed on the banner of most of them.

For the Labour Party the initial mistake of supporting the war was understandable (although the same cannot be said for Communists). But now the true character of the forces that are waging the war is being revealed in every issue of the newspapers. Shall the membership of the Labour Party insist on the truth being told, on the Labour movement cutting loose from support of the Imperialist war against Germany and of the counter-revolutionary war against the Soviet Union; or shall the movement stand by and applaud the slaughter of millions, all the time indulging in hideous cant about "the six principles," about the "new world order" to be secured by the victory of British Imperialism? Have the soldiers serving in the trenches, the seamen facing mine and torpedo, the women waiting at home, to receive no liberating message from the great mass organisations of the British working class, nothing but a stale rehash of the cant of a Halifax?

The rank and file of the British Labour movement cannot participate in this pitiful degradation; they cannot allow the Labour movement to fail and to betray as it did in 1914-18; they cannot tolerate a continuation of the political and economic co-operation of labour with the class which has dragged mankind into a new war; they must get on to the path of struggle against the war and against the social system which has produced the war.

The reactionary leaders will use every device to prevent the rank

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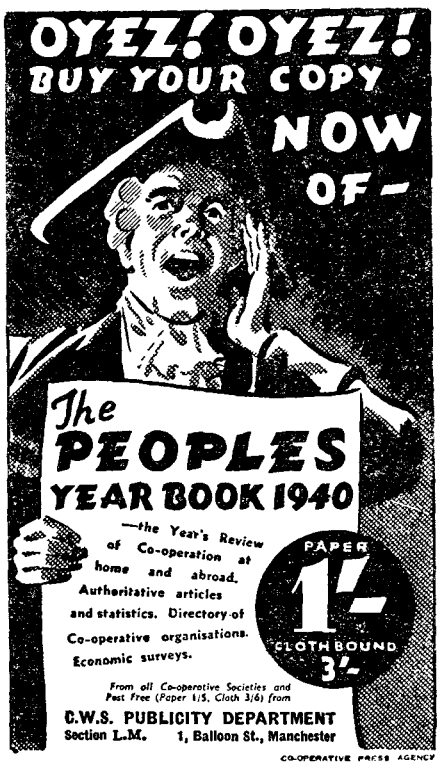
and file taking this path, they will impose regulations on their members in the interests of imperialism and call it party discipline, they will resort to expulsions from the unions. But the great mass of Labour Party members will find their way forward to new forms of organisation and struggle, to closer forms of co-operation with the workers of the Soviet Union and of Nazi Germany. They will find ways and means of isolating the reformist leaders and advancing to stopping the war by ensuring the victory of Socialism over Imperialism.

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# WAGES, PRICES AND UNEMPLOYMENT—

# A CORRECTION

THE ARTICLE PUBLISHED under this title in the LABOUR MONTHLY, December, 1939, contains a serious statistical error. While not affecting the account of conditions to-day it invalidates in certain respects the comparisons with the first two months of the preceding world war: all figures relating to price changes refer to the weeks and months after August 8, 1914 instead of August 1 or 5 (outbreak of the war) as would be inferred from the text.* In fact prices after August 8, 1914, had a tendency first to decline and then to increase only slightly—but between August 1 and August 8 prices rose rapidly. The first period of considerably rising prices, therefore, was in the preceding war condensed into one week—while to-day we notice price increases continuing without break from week to week from the first days of the war.

If we include the November figures, wages and cost of living during the present war have developed as follows:

| *Period* | *Cost of Living* | *Wage Rates*† | *Real Wage Rates* |
|---|---|---|---|
| September 1, 1939 .. | 100 | 100 | 100 |
| October 1, 1939 .. | 106 | 100 | 94 |
| November 1, 1939 .. | 109 | 101 | 92 |
| December 1, 1939 .. | 112 | 102 | 91 |

Real wages have declined from month to month since the war started. *Wages have to be increased, on the average, by 10 per cent. in order to reach the pre-war real wage-rate level even on the basis of official figures of the cost of living.*

JOHN KNIGHT.

*Many students of labour conditions in the previous war will consult the standard work by Bowley on Prices and Wages in the United Kingdom, 1914-1920. They should be warned to read for August 1, August 8 in the footnote to the table on retail price developments on page 42.

†Last day of the preceding month.

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# The Finnish Revolution—1

## BY O. W. KUUSINEN

[*Otto Kuusinen, Premier of the Provisional Government of the Finnish Democratic Republic, is long known to the internatianal working-class movement as the most famous and most respected of Fnland's revolutionary working-class Old Guard. Nationally noted since* 1908 *as a Socialist member of the Finnish Diet, Editor of the Central Organ of the Finnish Social Democratic Party before the war, Kuusinen was Minister of Education in the constitutional Socialist Government of* 1917-18 *which was overwhelmed by Mannerheim's White Guard, aided by the Kaiser's bayonets.*

*Immediately after that defeat Comrade Kuusinen wrote a masterly analysis of its causes, exposing the character of Finnish Social-Democracy, in a pamphlet which became famous in the international movement. An English translation of the pamphlet was published in London in* 1919 *under the title "The Finnish Revolution: a Self-criticism." That translation* THE LABOUR MONTHLY *now reprints, slightly abridged, in two instalments.*

*Next month's instalment will be found peculiarly topical, with its reference (of* 1918 !) *to "the Socialist renegade Tanner," the sidelight it throws on the importance of Hango, its discussion of the conditions for successful revolution in Finland.*]

### I. FEARS AND HESITATIONS IN FACE OF THE REVOLUTION

PROLETARIAN REVOLUTIONS, as Marx says, are always their own critics. We who have taken part in them ought consciously to facilitate this self-criticism, without, for that matter, seeking to avoid the historical responsibilities for our previous action. The Finnish Revolution began in January of this year (1918). Its mistakes had already begun in the preceding year.

Just as the war took most of the Socialist parties in the great European countries by surprise, and showed how little they were conscious of their historic mission, so in the spring of 1917 the Russian Revolution surprised Finnish Social Democracy. This spring-time liberty fell for us like a gift from the skies, and our party was overwhelmed by the intoxicating sap of March. The official watchword had been that of independent class-struggle, *i.e.*, the same which German Social Democracy had put forward before the war. During the reactionary period it was easy enough to maintain this position ; it was not exposed

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to any serious attack, and resistance on the part of the Socialists of the Right could not manage to make itself felt. In March the Party's proletarian virtue was exposed to temptation and fell into sin ; and in fact our Social Democracy prostituted itself just as much with the bourgeoisie of Finland as with that of Russia (at the beginning). The Russian Mensheviki also came forward as tempters. The Finnish Coalition Government was the offspring of this immoral union. At the time of its formation in March about half the Party representatives were opposed to it, and it was joined only by the Right Socialists. Nevertheless, the resistance of the others was of so passive a nature that it did not hinder for a single moment our collaboration with those Socialists who were hob-nobbing with Finnish and Russian landowners. And it was very characteristic that in our Party meeting, held in June—during which we, in passing, gave our adhesion to the Zimmerwald International—not a single voice was raised to demand separation from the Government Socialists.

What above all led us astray was the vague phantom of Parliamentary Democracy. If we had not had a Diet composed of a single Chamber, Proportional Representation and a relatively wide suffrage, and if in the elections of the summer of 1916 our Party had not obtained a majority in the Diet, it might perhaps have been easier to be on our guard against the spring temptation. But at this moment the path of Parliamentary Democracy seemed cleared to an extraordinary extent, and wide vistas opened themselves out before our working-class movement.

For Parliamentary Democracy to burst into full bloom it was now only necessary to get rid of the feeble authority of the Russian Provisional Government, to which the Finnish bourgeoisie clung like a drowning man to a straw. The Social-Democrats wished to brush aside, or at least to curtail, its legal right to interfere, so that it could not trouble the " internal affairs " of the country ; in other words, to protect the interests of the bourgeoisie. In this way our patriotism and our struggle for the independence of Finland seemed to spring from the very highest motives ; it was a direct fight for democratic liberty, an organic part of the proletarian class-war.

The legislative results obtained in the Diet during the summer played their part in lulling us in the illusions of Parliamentarianism. The normal working day of eight hours which the mass of the workers had already caused to be adopted in most trades, became law ; scarcely a Parliament had a more advanced law on this question than that of Finland. For the democratisation of the Communal Administration there was voted also a reform which meant that the power which had been entirely monopolised by the capitalists was transferred to the platform of Universal Suffrage—and this also was a bigger step in advance than had been known to any previous legislation. We saw clearly that the adoption of these laws was by no means due to the

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Parliament itself, but that a tempestuous wind from without had helped them to cross the shoals of Parliamentarianism with greater facility than in normal times. This tempest made itself felt in the form of a mass demonstration which accompanied a full session of the Diet, in which one was conscious of a spirit more violent than usual, thanks above all to the presence of some Russian soldier comrades. There was nothing new in this for us, for we had always explained that Parliamentarianism gives the best results when the people exert pressure from without.

A worse sign of the powerlessness of Parliamentary Democracy to obtain results was its inability to stop the wastage in food supplies. This naturally led to the belief that the Parliamentary results mentioned above were after all only results on paper, for the law necessary to stop speculation in food supplies was drawn up and voted, although that was as far as it got.

The hungry working masses soon lost all confidence in the Coalition Government and, when all is said, in the leaders of the Social-Democratic Party as well. At Helsingfors the enraged workers sought, on their own account, to take stock of and distribute the stores of butter, and in the autumn a general strike broke out quite spontaneously in the capital, and lasted two days until the organised proletariat ended it. The atmospheric pressure increased in a fashion most disturbing for our Parliamentarianism. It was the realisation of Democracy ; the free aggravation of the class struggle. But we Social-Democratic representatives failed to comprehend true democracy, and only its fleeting image was before our eyes.

This phantasmagoria was shaken for the first time by the Provisional Government of Kerensky. In spite of a violent resistance on the part of the bourgeois minority, the Diet had passed a fundamental law relating to the internal democratic liberty of Finland and to the Diet's right of wielding supreme power in the country. This law had been drawn up in accordance with the decisions of the Congress of Representatives of the All-Russian Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. A semi-official deputation of Mensheviki (Chkeidze, Lieber and Dan) came from Petrograd to prevent the passing of the so-called law of the " supreme power," but they were too late. Thereupon, at the end of July, the Russian Provisional Government dissolved the Diet and ordered new elections.

Our Party did not refuse to take part in the elections which were held at the beginning of October. By these elections, in spite of a marked increase in the number of Social-Democratic voters, we lost our majority in the Diet. Immediately after the elections the Press gave out that in the constituencies where the bureau was made up solely of bourgeois, the bourgeois parties had obtained a number of votes greater than that of the sum total of electors in the whole of the northern region. Later, during the revolution, there were discovered in the " cachettes " of

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presidents of electoral bureaux whole masses of Social-Democratic voting papers, regularly filled up. The bourgeoisie in addition gained several seats by means of electoral cartels. But, apart altogether from these causes, I am convinced that the nascent disgust at Parliamentarianism amongst the mass of the proletariat contributed to the election results. The Diet's powerlessness, and the uncertainty of the results of its work, its delays and lack of energy, the slackening of the political activity of Social-Democracy at the instance of the Coalition Government had the result that electoral enthusiasm among the proletariat was in no wise so great as one had the right to expect in view of the strong political tension then reigning.

As might have been expected, the bourgeoisie sought to make use of the advantage they had gained by seizing dictatorial power and degrading the Diet into a mere mask covering the dictatorship. The working class, on the other hand, had lost all hope of immediate help on the part of the Diet, and was tending consciously or unconsciously towards revolution. The Coalition Government had already been dissolved before the elections. Moreover, even in Finland it was felt that Russia was steering towards a new and more complete revolution, the explosion of which might be heard at any moment. Kerensky's Provisional Government was trembling like an aspen in a storm. The power of the Bolsheviki was growing like a storm-cloud.

Our Social-Democracy, which ought in this crisis to have put forth the whole of its forces in preparing for revolution, sat and waited calmly for the meeting of the Diet ! At the beginning of November the union of the bourgeois groups voted a resolution entrusting the supreme power in internal affairs—formerly a prerogative of the monarch—to a triumvirate, but did not dare to put this decision into execution. At the same time they entered into negotiations with the Russian Provisional Government concerning the sharing of power. Nekrasoff, the Governor-General of Kerensky's Government, left for Petrograd, taking with him a draft of an agreement for signature. But he did not return to Helsingfors. The Russian proletariat had at that very time, under the leadership of the Bolshevik party, overthrown the bourgeoisie and their lackeys and had itself taken the reins of power. Amongst us, too, the genius of revolt passed over the country. We did not mount upon its wings, but bowed our heads and let it fly far above us. In this way November was for us but a festival to commemorate our capitulation.

Would revolution at that time have given us the victory in Finland ? That is not the same thing as asking if the revolution of the proletariat would have been able to get the victory directly as in Russia. At this distance the first seems probable. The second, on the other hand, improbable, just as it did at the time.

The chances of success were not on the whole bad. The enthusiasm and desire to fight on the part of the proletariat were, on the whole, great. The bourgeoisie was relatively badly armed, in spite of the fact

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that it had begun to get arms from Germany. It is true that the proletariat was also without arms. We borrowed several hundreds of rifles from groups of Russian soldiers at Helsingfors, and that was practically speaking all that we had in the way of arms at that time. There is no doubt, however, that more could have been obtained, at need, from Russian comrades, at least up to a certain point. What was far more important, the Russian soldiers could have given much more direct military aid to the Finnish Revolution than later during the winter, when the *débâcle* of the Russian army and navy was at its height.

In face of these signs we Social-Democrats, " united on the basis of the class war," swung first to one side and then to the other, leaning first of all strongly towards revolution, only to draw back again. The true Socialists of the Right, who were about half the Party, were divided into two groups, one distinctly opposing the revolution and the other desiring it. In the Social-Democratic group of the Diet, the majority was evidently so hostile to the revolutionary currents that it could be said to be with the bourgeoisie rather than with the proletariat. On the other hand, the Right Socialist leaders in the district organisations wanted to have recourse to a sort of revolution, a kind of revolutionary general strike, to obtain the majority in the Government.

Acting in conjunction with them the Council of our Party formed a Central Revolutionary Council which, especially after the Social-Democratic members of the Diet had given their adhesion—at first they were openly hostile to revolution—was good enough at making speeches on revolution, but impotent to carry out truly revolutionary policy. This Council decided to begin by supporting the proclamation of a general strike. At a congress of representatives of the territorial organisation which had just met, it was decided to call a general strike embracing the whole country. Was this strike to mean revolution, or simply a demonstration in support of the demands put forward in the strike manifesto ? No decision was taken, for we were not at one on this point.

The general strike spread throughout the country. Our " Central Revolutionary Council " discussed the question of going further. We, who without reason have been called " Marxists," did not wish to do so, and the " revolutionaries " of the district organisations did not wish to go forward without us.

In not desiring to go as far as revolution, we Social-Democrats of the Centre were, in a way, acting consistently with our point of view, imbued, as this had been for many years, with Socialist activity. We were in fact Social-Democrats and not Marxists. Our Social-Democratic point of view was : (1) Peaceful, continuous, but not revolutionary class-war, and at the same time (2) an independent class-war, seeking no alliance with the bourgeoisie. These two points of view decided our tactics.

(1) We did not believe in revolution ; we did not trust it, nor did

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we call for it. This, when all is said, is characteristic of Social-Democracy.

Social-Democracy is in principle a working-class movement, which organises and moulds the workers for the class struggle (legal, bourgeois and parliamentary). It is true that Socialism finds a place in its programme, as the goal to be aimed at, and that, in a certain measure, it is a factor in the general trend of the true or " immediate " programme of Social-Democracy. But on the whole it is only a Utopian ornament, seeing that it is impossible even to imagine Socialism as realisable within bourgeois society, in the framework of which the practical action of Social-Democracy is nevertheless enclosed. The road historically unavoidable for passing from bourgeois into socialist society, the road of revolution and of the dictatorship of the armed proletariat is quite outside the conscious, practical field of operation of Social-Democracy ; it begins only where the action of Social-Democracy ends.

The relations of a consistent Social-Democracy with revolution are just as passive as those of a tolerant historian with respect to the revolutionaries of past times. " The revolution is born, not made " is the favourite expression of Social-Democracy, for it considers that it is not its sphere to *work* in support of revolution. It has on the contrary a natural tendency to delay the revolutionary explosion. This is easy enough to understand from the viewpoint of the true practical object of Social-Democracy : the revolutionary movement distrusts its action and threatens to interrupt it. Now as one cannot, when it is a question of revolution, decide with absolute certainty whether it will lead at the first essay to victory or to defeat, it always, in the event of revolution, seems possible that danger threatens the gains of Social-Democracy's work of organisation, of its political conquests, its organisations, offices, libraries, newspapers, reforming laws, democratic institutions, acquired rights, etc. The whole practical action of Social-Democracy is founded on these benefits. They have become in part the intrinsic aim of its life ; they are for the most part necessary to its future evolution and to its existence on the field of bourgeois legality. That is why Social-Democracy strives by all means in its power to protect and conserve its conquests, even if danger threatens them from the side of the proletarian revolution.

In November, 1917, however, we determined to avoid the revolutionary struggle, partly in order to protect our democratic conquests, partly because we hoped to be able to weather the storm by parliamentary means, perhaps also with the fatalistic idea in our minds, that " if the revolution comes now or later, it will come in spite of our resistance, and will show its power to the full."

What was the result of this historical error ? Could we avoid an armed conflict ? No ! It was only postponed until a time when the bourgeoisie would be better prepared for it than they were in November.

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The bourgeoisie always bring about a conflict with the workers when they desire it. In the fight put up by the working class there was but one danger, namely, that the bourgeoisie might determine the moment for the outbreak of the revolution. When the workers begin the revolution the bourgeoisie are not always ready at every point, and may thus be partially taken by surprise, especially if a reactionary government has for a considerable time been arousing feelings of hatred amongst the masses. In that case, a revolution set in motion by the workers may carry with it the discontented middle classes, or at least it may disunite and discourage the partisans of the Government.

It may be taken for granted that at the moment when the class-war breaks out, the Government will know how to arrange the external situation as favourably as possible according to its needs, will, if possible, have sought help from outside, or in any case will have made ready in the rear against any attack coming from inside the frontier. In November the bourgeois class of Finland would have had more trouble in obtaining help from the German Government than they subsequently had in winter, when the German troops had been withdrawn from the Russian front—but it was difficult for us to foresee this in November, or for that matter in January either.

(2) We Centre Social-Democrats did not wish to form a " bloc " with the bourgeois " Liberals," although the Right Social-Democrats, those who were for, equally with those who were against, the revolution, looked upon it as desirable. With some sort of " entente " of this kind it was scarcely to be hoped that the aim which was floating before the eyes of the " Centrist " Social-Democrats could be realised, *i.e.*, the formation of a Liberal Government whose members should be in great part Socialists, and whose programme should be the alleviation of the food famine and the adoption of a hundred different reforms through parliamentary methods. That several Agrarians might be included as a sort of reinforcement in a " Red " senate constituted by " revolutionary means " was looked upon favourably by the Right Social-Democrats. With this in view the Social-Democratic group of the Diet, during the week of the general strike, held several conferences with the Agrarian Party, and probably also with certain other Liberal groups, and " Comrade " Tokoi (the former Premier) made enquiries as to whether the Senate officials would remain at their posts under a " Red Senate." Thus the object of the " revolutionary " Social-Democrats was in reality to reform the spring Coalition Senate in a more thorough way than before, *i.e.*, with a Social-Democratic majority, and leaving eventually the worst reactionaries out of account altogether.

Viewing the matter in the most favourable light, this result might well have been obtained by the revolution in November. Nothing more. Finnish Social-Democracy could have gained nothing else. One section of the workers would certainly have demanded more extreme

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measures, but the majority of our working-class party, which was contented with so little, would then have been able to stifle the real revolutionary voice of the proletariat, for having obtained satisfaction on this point, it would have opposed the revolutionary demands for a dictatorship. It would then have attained its object or very nearly so. At this distance it now seems even more probable than it did then. In any case the Finnish bourgeois class would probably have given way for the time being before the revolutionary movement, in order the better to protect its own chief interests, which were in no way threatened by the Right Social-Democrats. The Finnish revolution in November would then most probably have become a bourgeois revolution with Liberal tendencies. There would then have been a split in the ranks of the organised workers: the Right Wing would have drawn nearer to the Conservative front with the bourgeoisie, the Left would have been the standard bearer of revolutionary Socialism or Communism, and would have continued to attack the bourgeois State with its partisans and powers.

It was in some such way, although not so clearly, that we "Marxists" in the Party Council had figured to ourselves the results of a revolution already continued during the week of the November general strike. But for that very reason we had two very weighty reasons for opposing the revolution: (1) We did not want to help in uniting the Right Socialists with the bourgeoisie, and (2) we wished to avoid splitting the Social-Democrats in two opposite camps. So that from this standpoint also our thought was moving in channels characteristic, not of Marxism, but of Social-Democracy. In fact, we curbed the historic evolution of things by preventing a split in the working-class movement, although the beginnings of such a division were already a necessary condition if the working-class movement were to advance towards a consciously revolutionary goal.

And now artificially patched up and with sections in opposition to one another, the movement was absolutely incapable of action. A division, it is true, might have been damaging to Social-Democratic action, *i.e.*, to the success of parliamentary and trade union work. Hopes of a success at the polls might have been lessened by it. But for the real progress of the working-class movement, and for the strengthening of the class-war, this internal rupture could not but have been of service. It would have meant the withdrawal from the working-class front of harmful and doubtful elements, which, ranged on the side of the bourgeoisie, would have done less damage to the revolutionary class struggle than in the ranks of the workers themselves.

Doubtless, in spite of the most intense effort, we should in all probability have been unable to dictate the revolution's immediate conquests. History itself would have done that. But we ought to have made the attempt, we ought to have fought and attacked, so as to help in the progress of events as much as possible. History itself cannot work with

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empty gloves—it needs fighting hands. And even if the great break up of the ice had not come in the history of the class struggle in Finland, but had confined itself to disintegrating the bourgeois "bloc," this break-up would have been one step in advance. The force of resistance of the ice-block would have been weakened ; the pressure of the torrent would not have been broken against a compact roof, and would have been able to bring all its strength and weight to bear against the opposing obstacle until it smashed it. This is, indeed, the most rapid and natural method to use in ice-breaking. It is just what came about in Russia. By this method a good beginning may most easily be made. The resistant power of the bourgeois State is thus largely put out of working order at the decisive moment. On the other hand the break up may hang out for weeks beyond the prescribed time, if the ice crust is of equal thickness right up to the last moment ; if there are not formed here and there cracks and eddies before the final rupture.

We prevented the formation of these eddies by countermanding the general strike at the end of a week and by referring back a decision as to revolution to the Party Congress. This caused discontent and even exasperation amongst the working masses. The discontent did not reach the stage of revolt against the Party leaders, but it acted in a manner which was if anything still more dangerous for the future class struggles of the workers ; confidence in the party leaders was to a great extent lost.

The leaders who had need, as one would have thought, of well-stoked fires in order to get up full speed against the enemy, now gaining strength, wasted their time in blowing upon and rekindling the embers of distrust. The awakened mistrust and hostility made themselves felt in the sequel as a nightmare during the whole course of the revolution. In this way there was sown in November the seed of the April débâcle. The Party Congress, which met a few weeks after the general strike, felt that already the crest of the revolutionary wave was beginning to fall under the influence of various cross currents. The delegates present at the conference had been elected during the spring, when conditions were quite different. About half of these delegates seemed to be more or less favourable to revolution ; the other half was opposed to it. We Centrists wanted, above everything, to keep the party together, and we "succeeded." In the joint resolution there was no statement either for or against revolution, but in its place the spirit of the old class struggle manifested itself ; also a whole crowd of meaningless reforms were demanded by the bourgeoisie, and an appeal to arm was made to the workers, not, however, for a revolutionary offensive, but for the defence that had become necessary.

For the moment the necessity for defence had become the most important question, as the bourgeoisie, seeing that for the time being it had escaped the danger of revolution, was now consciously preparing for the attack. The bourgeois newspapers openly conducted a fierce

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campaign against Social-Democracy, and with more secrecy the bourgeoisie got ready for war, procured arms, drilled and put the bourgeois army on a footing, and despatched agents abroad on urgent missions. The workers' guard also drilled, and the party council even co-operated in this work. But the work went on lazily, without the necessary intensity and energy. Little revolutions with their anarchic influences were threatening here and there ; at Abo a revolution of this kind broke out.

The work of Parliament was not, and could not be, anything other than harmful to the working class movement. All that it did was to bind together in a useless way all our forces which were necessary for the revolutionary struggle. It only served to deceive the masses and helped to mask what was coming, to close their eyes to bourgeois preparations, such preparations as the workers themselves ought to have made. When the revolution had threatened to break out in November we had been successful in getting a decision from the democratic majority of the Diet, according to which the Diet itself, and not merely a Government " bloc," would have wielded the supreme power in the country. This seemed a real step, small enough it is true, towards pure democracy. In the Constituent Commission we were already tracing the fundamental lines of this régime, so fine in perspective, and decided to institute a competition for the best design for a flag for the Finnish Democratic State. It was then that we heard from the lips of M. Svinhufvud the constitution of the Capitalist State. It contained but one paragraph : " A strong police force."

(*To be concluded.*)

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# DOCUMENT OF THE MONTH

## Regimentation of Labour in France

A RECENT CIRCULAR of the French Ministry of Labour to its inspectors throws new light on the position of the working class and its movement in France. The circular, which was published in the *Journal Officiel* of December 16th, 1939, concerned the application of the decree of 10th November last on labour control and the appointment of workers' delegates. The Ministry told its inspectors that, in supervising these latter appointments, " you must take care to see that, under cover of defending the workers' cause, more or less cleverly concealed fomenters of disorder do not slip in among the delegates." The principal following passages of the circular were :

The Government is resolved to avoid the sterile agitation that an election (of workers' delegates) might provoke. . . . It did not seem possible to continue the election of employees' delegates in industrial and commercial establishments ; to apply the election system prescribed in the Decree of 12th November, 1938, and Part I. of the Labour Code, would have meant the importing into works, yards and shops discussions and agitation incompatible with the state of war.

The delegate must be an agent of social peace ; this essential objective must dictate the procedure controlling his appointment . . .

*The rôle of the most representative legal workers' organisations.*

(*b*) Legal organisations are those whose leaders have not belonged to any of the organisations against which the Decree of 26th September, 1939, was directed ; . . .

(*d*) Groups not having a strictly trade union character can appoint delegates ;

(*e*) Delegates must be twenty-five years of age, be able to read and write, must never have suffered any legal penalties, and must not have been members of any of the organisations against which the Decree of 26th September, 1939, was directed. They must have been employed for one year in the establishment concerned ;

(*f*) Whenever the situation appears to warrant it, the present delegates may be maintained in their posts, if they have given proofs of their experience and independence. . . .

The *Informations Hebdomadaires* (" Weekly Information "), bulletin of the Confédération Générale du Travail, comments that " the method of appointment of workers' delegates has been modified. It now conforms to the view always held by the C.G.T. Henceforth the delegates will be the representatives of the trade union organisations, under whose responsible guidance they will act. In this way an end will be put to political intrigues and their unfortunate effects." " Political intrigues," it is then made clear, mean the " Stalinist practice " of " circulating ' political slogans ' on trade union responsibility."

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# "Labour Monthly" Readers' Groups

WE HAVE RECEIVED a number of letters which show that discussion of the articles appearing in the LABOUR MONTHLY is being carried on in various parts of the country in addition to the Group of which we published news last month. This discussion sometimes forms part of the programme of a group not formed exclusively of LABOUR MONTHLY readers. Thus a reader in Halifax writes:

> We have our education group here, and I have just been able to persuade them to set aside one night in the month to discuss the LABOUR MONTHLY as part of our educational work.

Or from East London:

> We have a number of such circles based mainly among the tenants (arising from Tenants' Committees), which meet weekly and once a month, immediately after the issue of the current publication, discuss the Notes of the Month or some other major article in the LABOUR MONTHLY.

In Warrington a group held a discussion on the article by Mao Tse-Tung, in the October number. The convenor writes:

> The points raised in that article aroused the members to vigorous discussion and everyone present enjoyed it. Without a doubt our knowledge was increased not only about the situation in China, but in the application of Marxism to the raising of "cadres."

This letter brings out the point in our note last month that the discussion at such a group cannot fail to develop the understanding by the members of the political situation. This is the main object of the LABOUR MONTHLY, and it is clearly being helped forward by the formation of Groups.

A reader in Stamford Hill writes that he would like to make contact with others for the purpose of study and discussion. If any other readers in this district would like to be put in touch with him, will they please let us hear from them.

From Bristol also we hear of moves to start groups, of which we hope to have further news to publish in the future.

We are glad to be able to acknowledge for our development fund a donation from the Hampstead Garden Suburb Group. The convenor writes:

> I am confident that we can keep up our attendance and maintain average collections of 10s. a month which was what we aimed at.

We still need donations and are very grateful to this group. We hope that it may act as an example to others.

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## BOOK REVIEW

# Spanish Strategy

*The Last Days of Madrid* by Colonel Casado. (Peter Davies. 8s. 6d.)

COLONEL CASADO, the ambitious Staff Officer and Army Commander of the Republican Army in Spain, who became the gravedigger of the liberty and independence of the Spanish people, has failed completely in his recent book to justify politically and militarily his putsch against the Government of Dr. Negrin. Together with the British and French Governments, Casado and the Right Wing Socialist Besteiro bear the full responsibility for the tragic bloodshed during the first week of March in Madrid, the surrender of the central zone of Spain to Franco and Gambara and the handing over of many thousands of the best Spanish anti-fascists to the execution squads and the prisons of the Phalange. The political action of Colonel Casado will be judged one day by the Spanish people, and has been already judged by all honest friends of the Spanish Republic in this country and elsewhere.

The military views of the operation chief of the Republican General Staff in early 1937 and of the later Army Corps and Army Commander Casado, however, might lead astray some military critics, who do not accept the attitude of the political adventurer, but believe in the military technician. Colonel Casado makes too big mistakes when he deals with military science. His critique of the strategy of the Spanish War is intentionally wrong. He has lost in his blind hate against the glorious Communist Party of Spain and the Socialist Soviet Union the objectivity of a former teacher of military science. Colonel Casado asserts that " in the actual war operations the Spanish tacticians believed in remaining on the defensive, trying to wear down the enemy and waste his resources." This strategy, however,—according to Casado's opinion—was not carried through. " We " —apparently the " Spanish tacticians " of the completely Spanish Central General Staff under the Spanish General Rojo's direction—" attempted, sometimes at the suggestion of Russian technicians and sometimes through their insistence, offensives at Brunete, Teruel and Aragon." The result of these, as " we " (Colonel Casado probably) could foresee, was to " confirm our impotence and waste our meagre reserves."

What are the facts ? There is no doubt that owing to the great numerical superiority of the German-Italian material Franco could maintain almost through the whole war the strategic initiative, while the Republican strategy, on account of the shortage of planes, artillery, transport and ammunition, had to be defensive. The battles of Brunete and for Zaragossa in Aragon were never anything else than diversion actions with tactically limited offensive objectives within the general defensive strategy of the Republican General Staff. Their strategic objective was to relieve the pressure of the German and Italian invasion of the Northern provinces. The operation order of Lt.-Col. Casado, at that time commander of the XXIst Army Corps, for the second attack on Zaragossa in early October, 1937, states that very clearly. Both operations failed on account of the superiority of the enemy's artillery and aviation, and of the insufficient mobility and training of the just born Popular Army. The tactical objectives of both operations were very important. The conquest of Zaragossa or the cutting off of the enemy's communications with his Madrid front might have resulted in considerable

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strategic advantages. The military historians of the German and French General Staffs have studied very carefully the operation plan of the battle of Brunete and how it was carried through. Both agree that this operation bears the stamp of great military leadership and might—if it had been carried out successfully—have led to a turning point in the military situation in Spain.

The Republican offensive operations against Teruel and across the Ebro, which proved the high military standard of the Spanish Popular Army, are only to be understood within the defensive strategy of the Republican High Command. They were model performances of "baited attacks"—to use the phrase of Liddell Hart. The enemy was obliged in the first case to stop the preparations for his immediate Madrid offensive, and in the second case to stop his dangerous drive towards Valencia. He had to fight on the difficult and prepared ground chosen by the Republican command, where his material and men were worn out in expensive counter-offensives.

Colonel Casado claims for himself the authorship of the operative idea for a big Republican offensive in Estremadura with the objective of reaching Badajoz and dividing the fascist territory in two. There is no doubt that this operation, if successfully carried through, might have decided the war in favour of the Republic. Casado, however, suggested this operation for spring or summer, 1937, at a time when the young Popular Army did not possess sufficient reserves and the necessary mobility and training of officers and men for such a wide-scale operation of mobile warfare. The General Staff could not accept at that time Casado's operation plan for an Estremadura offensive. It was later on planned for spring, 1938, and carried through finally, but unsuccessfully, under most difficult conditions and with a tragic shortage of material and shells in January, 1939, in order to relieve the serious situation in Catalonia.

The strategic aspects of the Spanish War as seen by Colonel Casado do not reflect the reality of the military situation in Spain. They prove that the strategic thinking of the former Director of the Republican Staff College has been entirely influenced by his vain attempt to justify his surrender of Madrid and Valencia to Franco in spite of the possibilities of resistance for a period of at least several months.

STRATEGIST.

## *SHORTER NOTICE*

*Mohammed and Charlemagne* by Henri Pirenne. (Allen & Unwin. 10s. 6d.)

"WITHOUT MOHAMMED CHARLEMAGNE would have been inconceivable," wrote the late Professor Pirenne, summing up in a phrase his theory of the transition from the ancient to the medieval world. This book documents his case. He argues that in fact the decadent Roman Empire was not overwhelmed by the barbarians. Its culture and institutions, though decadent, continued. Its basic Mediterranean unity was unimpaired. Europe, he claims, was on the way to becoming Byzantine when the irruption of Islam shattered the Mediterranean unity. Out of the ruins of the old imperial society feudalism arose and the Middle Ages proper began. Incidental light on the specific historical development of England is afforded by the suggestion that it was the one country where the barbarian invasion did sweep away the civilisation of the Empire and start virtually free of Roman influences.

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